

Podcasts as modern strategies for promoting reading literacy and reading culture and their impact on professionals

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The paper draws attention to the modern strategies in promoting reading literacy and reading culture in the professional environment, with emphasis podcasts in the Slovenian public libraries as strategy. We investigated the usefulness of this strategy promoting a particular professional event aiming the potential impact on certain elements such as motivation, belonging and meaning. The analytical research of the results herein shows the attitude of professionals towards podcasts and is the first of it's kind in Slovenia. Data were obtained using the survey method and is part of a larger study aiming to determine the impact of the professional events on the competencies. General findings establish the connection between knowing or following podcasts and the impact on individual elements of professional competences. The results showed a positive attitude of professionals leading in encouragement of reading literacy and reading culture. Comparative results show a positive trend in connection between listening to podcasts and professional competence. Those professionals who received information about podcasts, i.e. were exposed through promotion to a professional event, also listened to, and this marked their professional self-perception. Limitations are related to the size of the research, which is based on one case study. Regardless, a sizeable sample is included, which can serve as starter for a larger research to determine the impact on competencies. This enquiry in connection with competencies of professionals is not common, nor are surveys that focus on the attitude to modern strategies. Individual's attitude is highlighted when introducing modern strategies reading literacy and reading culture promotion.

Keywords: reading literacy, reading culture, professionals, podcasts, influence, public libraries, Slovenia

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1. Introduction and literature survey

Reading literacy and reading culture are concepts that are present in the form of various activities throughout life. They are present in everyday life, as well as in the professional environment and in the field of scientific research. They were present yesterday, are today and will be present tomorrow. Regardless of the various definitions, that can be found in everyday life, in professional and scientific literature, they concern the most important area of human development. Reading literacy is the ability not only of the individual, but of society as a whole, which helps to articulate the content of life for progress, development, for the preservation of historical memory and, ultimately, for survival. If we do not know how to read, understand, evaluate what is written and write something, we are lost in modern times of too fast, too powerful and often false information. Reading culture is a building block of the attitude towards awareness of the importance of reading and books in various forms. Not just reading to spend free time. Reading has passed the importance of this, otherwise still extremely important dimension for the development of reading skills. Reading is not only important as a technique or a way of spending free time, it is important for all human development, from textual skills, development of imagination, stimulating empathy, strengthening focus and concentration and restoring or establishing many connections in the brain (Wolf 2018).

Reading literacy and reading culture are present in various doses in the family and public sphere of the individual's activities. Most often, as part of public activity, they fall within the framework of public services, ie those contents of social life that are systematically and financially supported by the state or the local community. This means that the concepts of reading literacy and reading culture are present e.g. in kindergartens, schools, libraries, colleges, museums.

In the context of this paper, we are interested in the concepts of reading literacy and reading culture within the context of a public library. Slovenia has a diversified and efficiently established system of public libraries. The library activity is performed by 58 public libraries, which operate in more than a thousand smaller and larger places in Slovenia. Library activity is carried out in the system of public libraries at 273 locations and with the help of 13 bibliobuses. All public libraries have 12 million items and more than 10 million visitors a year. One fifth of the total population of Slovenia are members of public libraries, and more than half of the population of the Republic of Slovenia uses library services in various ways.

Each member of the library borrows an average of 40 units of material per year and can choose from over 480 events organized annually by each of the 58 central libraries. Libraries are physical and virtual spaces of learning, events, meetings and inspiration in the local community, information centres or third places of socializing, social networking and democratic cooperation (Knjižnice.si 2022). Ten public libraries in the system of Slovenian public libraries have a special status, namely the status of the central regional library. Central Regional Libraries (OOK) are public libraries that perform special tasks for the territory of a province or part of a province on the basis of a contract with the ministry of culture and in agreement with their founder, as follows: provision of enlarged and more demanding assortment of materials and information, professional assistance to the libraries of their area, coordination of the collection development, cataloguing and storage of local history material and directing the weeded library material from their area.

The Maribor Library (Maribor Public Library 2022) is one of the ten central regional libraries. The Maribor Library is a general, public library consisting of 21 local libraries and the library bus (mobile library). It covers an area of 182,200 inhabitants. Libraries and library bus with 47 stops cover the area of fourteen municipalities (Maribor, Duplek, Hoče-Slivnica, Kungota, Lovrenc na Pohorju, Miklavž na Dravskem polje, Pesnica, Rače-Fram, Ruše, Selnica ob Dravi, Starše, Šentilj and in the wider area Slovenska Bistrica, and Oplotnica). Every 2 weeks, the library bus visits places where there are no stationary libraries in the immediate vicinity. The Maribor Library also performs the functions of the central regional library, thus reaching the area of the Lenart Library and the Josip Vošnjak Library in Slovenska Bistrica, thus the area with 212,000 inhabitants. In addition to lending library materials in individual units and offering information, it offers various user services and events for different target groups of local residents: meetings and talks with various artists, workshops, fairytale hours, playrooms, lectures and clubs for retirees, teaching for information literacy of individual target groups, lending to the hospital, home lending, mobile collections of materials in nursing homes, care centres and cultural and artistic associations, special forms of work for the integration of vulnerable groups in the library (migrants, blind, visually impaired, deaf, hard of hearing, people with mental disorders development...), etc. It publishes a professional magazine on issues of youth literature, literary education and book-related media, *Child and Book*. On 1 January 2019, it established the Center for Reading Literacy Promotion (hereinafter: the Center). This Center is intended for librarians of Slovenian public libraries and encourages cooperation between librarians of various libraries and the connection of librarians and other stakeholders in the field of reading literacy in Slovenia.

The Centre's program guidelines (The Center for Reading Literacy Promotion 2022) relate to the need for professional staff in public libraries for continuous training and improvement in the field of reading literacy and reading culture. Every year, the Center organizes a professional event called ABC Reading Literacy as the chosen method for transferring professional innovations among stakeholders in the field of reading literacy and reading culture. In the annual program, the Center has a permanent task to bring to the Slovenian library space those professional contents that will influence the improvement of the competencies of professional staff in libraries. Previous research (Fras Popović 2021; Fras Popović & Vilar 2022a) has confirmed the assumption that this method of work enables the achievement of strategic goals of the national strategy (National, 2019) and the implementation of individual elements of the proactive public library model to promote reading culture and reading literacy, set up in the Slovenian library space by Vilar et al. (2017) and compliance with professional guidelines for profiling library roles and the development of professional competencies in relation to professional recommendations and standards for public libraries (Professional, 2018).

In pursuit of its purpose, the Center researches various professional and scientific fields in order to increase the flow of information, influence the competence of professionals and regularly encourage the professional and wider social space to be aware of the importance of reading literacy and reading culture for everyday life. Scientific and professional research of the Center in 2021 led to the introduction and placement in the professional space of one of the modern strategies for promoting reading literacy and reading culture, namely podcasts.

Strategies to promote reading literacy and reading culture are pathways, that encourage non-readers and readers to progress and enable them to establish a positive attitude towards reading and books (Wolf 2018).

In the last decade, social networks (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok, YouTube) have become an important factor in promoting reading literacy and, above all, in building reading culture (Carr 2010; Wolf 2018). Among them we also find podcasts. Their presence in the library world can be linked to 2012 (De Sarkar 2012). In 2022, the podcast, especially in the Anglo-American world, is a well-established and often present strategy for promoting the professional development of

librarians, acquainting them with professional literature and also book novelties. (e.g. ALA New Professionals Section Podcast, 2022).

The epidemic that marked the last two years also had a certain impact on the increased incidence and usability of modern strategies or various technological tools. Faced with the situation brought about by the epidemic from the very beginning, many public libraries have transferred traditional content to online access, using mostly one of the modern strategies and technological solutions, ie YouTube. In the aftermath of the epidemic, more and more experts drew attention to the excessive use of screen media and the effects of constantly looking at screens, especially for the eyes. The transition from one strategy to another, e.g. from using a You Tube channel to a podcast, it also represents a transition from looks to content only. An epidemic with various limitations certainly had a special impact on the increased incidence of podcasts, but we do not find this connection in this paper. In research, this is only a circumstance that has encouraged researchers to choose a particular modern strategy.

1.1 Definition of core terms and presentation of the case study background

With the help of literature, we explain the concept of **podcast** and its placement in the field of modern strategies for promoting reading literacy and reading culture. We also define the concept of **impact**, as we determine the impact of modern strategies on the behaviour of professionals (Fras Popović 2021; Fras Popović & Vilar 2022a).

The definition of impact is summarized according to the international standard ISO 16439: 2015 Informatics and documentation - Methods and procedures for assessing the impact of libraries (2015 p. 10), where impact is defined as "change or difference in behaviour of an individual or society resulting from contact with services libraries. A change can be tangible or intangible." From the standard we also take the definition of the term **event**, which is a previously agreed activity with cultural, educational, social, political, educational or any other purpose. Only events organized by the library itself or in collaboration with other institutions, indoors or outdoors, are included. Events that take place in the library, but are organized by external institutions without the participation of the library, are excluded." (ISO 2015 p. 9).

The phrase modern strategy is explained in this paper using the a basic explanation of the concepts of both words. We tie the concept of the word modern to the present. So, one that is accessible in the present and responds to the characteristics of the present. For us, strategy in this paper means a way or procedure to achieve a certain goal. So, in the context of modern strategies for promoting reading literacy and reading culture, we are talking about procedures, ways that can be used to achieve a certain goal and are relevant at the moment. Our specific goal is to stimulate interest in reading literacy and reading culture.

The present time offers various strategies, most commonly known as social networks. Because we also know many negative effects of social networks on reading literacy and reading culture (e.g. Carr 2010), we decided to use those modern strategies that put content before appearance and do not highlight the negative effects of screen media use. In our opinion, a modern strategy in promoting reading literacy and reading culture that responds to the needs, requirements and habits of the individual in current, even epidemiologically coloured social circumstances is a podcast.

The podcast is, according to various definitions, available mainly on the Internet, and is a collection or series of digital audio files that are made available for download or listening via the Internet. The origins of this form date back to early 2004, when Ben Hammersley first used the term podcast in an article in *The Guardian*, and the intense initial development dates back to the second half of 2004¹. The use and expansion of podcasts has also been particularly affected by the recent epidemic, which has brought with it a number of restrictions on physical contact and meeting people.

The use of podcasts eliminates communication constraints and factors that limit the growth of internet radio. The ability to choose, order, and listen to podcast content whenever we want is a great attraction in today's lifestyle, where time and choice are becoming a privilege. The terms that define podcasts are: automaticity, streaming, frequency, accessibility. One of the first articles on the topic of podcasts in the library environment dates back to 2012 (De Sarkar 2012). The purpose of that paper was to provide an overview of the use of the podcast in academic and general libraries with an emphasis on its purpose and characteristics, and to give the level of acceptance of the podcast in different types of libraries across continents. De Sarkar (2012) notes that library podcasts have some basic features and are implemented for specific purposes. The article also reveals that receiving podcasts varies by geographic region. The study found that the expansion of podcast implementation is high in North American libraries, while the intention to adopt a podcast is high in Australian libraries. The data refer to a period a decade before the time marked by the epidemic. Certain articles that provide an overview of available podcasts related to reading promotion or those prepared by libraries (eg *Book and Library related Podcasts 2020*) show the diversity, presence and offer of podcasts. The presence of podcasts has been steadily increasing in recent years. Most podcasts are free and can be accessed on smartphones, laptops and smart speakers through a variety of free apps like Spotify or iTunes, and dedicated apps like BBC Sounds, Podbean and Audible.

Research shows the usefulness of podcasts to support children's learning and give them greater access to content from different parts of the world and different topics. One such research report is the *Nacional Literacy Trust (2021)*, which links podcast use and literacy. The report reveals the positive impact of listening to podcasts on children's reading habits. They found that children and adolescents who listen to podcasts read more and enjoy reading more than their peers who do not listen to podcasts. They also found the prevalence of listening to podcasts among children and adolescents and found that one-fifth of children and adolescents listen to podcasts. The proportion of children listening to podcasts during the closure during the epidemic was even higher. One in four children and adolescents regularly listened to podcasts during the closure during the epidemic.

We assume that podcasts aimed at children and young people are mainly related to the presentation of youth literature. In reviewing the offer of library podcasts, we realized that the offer of podcasts that address professionals in the field of promoting literacy and reading culture (e.g. *Dowling 2017*) has also increased in the last decade.

1 MTV video jockey Adam Curry and Dave Winer, a software developer, pioneer in blogging, and media hacker, played an important role in this by pioneering thinking about new types of media and the idea of open and easily accessible systems. podcasts. In 2004, a program called iPodder was created, which allowed automatic transmission of radio broadcasts to the iPod. This year, journalist Ben Hammersley proposed the term podcasting for this type of Internet radio broadcast. A few months later, Daniel D. Gregoire used this term to automatically transfer and sync audio content. In 2004, RSS (really simple syndication) became the standard for content distribution, allowing users to receive audio and video content to their source. In November 2004, *Liberated Syndication (Libsyn)* launched its first offering of Podcast services. In 2005, Apple added podcasting to the iTunes music store. From this year onwards, the use and presence of podcasts expands to various areas of social activity.

We are also interested in the impact of podcasts, i.e. selected modern strategies for promoting reading literacy and reading culture, on the professional competencies of professionals in the field of reading literacy and reading culture. We relate the term professional competence (Fras Popović 2021) to the definition of a public library in Slovenia. However, since the definition of the mission of the public library is internationally agreed, the definition of professional competencies is also transferable from the Slovenian space to the wider professional space. Professional recommendations for Slovenian public libraries (Strokovna priporočila in standardi za splošne knjižnice 2019) bring to Slovenia a definition of competencies that connects knowledge, skills, abilities, characteristics, actions, and behaviour in the work environment and in the work environment with the requirements of the workplace. This intertwining of personal characteristics with the requirements of the field of work and the workplace allows them to act confidently. Fras Popović (2016 p. 14) also understands competencies in the general library environment as the ability of an individual to activate, use and connect the acquired knowledge in complex, diverse and unpredictable situations. As we pointed out in the previous papers (Fras Popović 2021; Fras Popović & Vilar 2022a), general competencies are the ones that most characterize an individual's personal life, as they are mostly related to the character of the individual and his private life, and are also transferable between professions, as the individual brings or takes them with him. Specific competencies in our case are called professional competencies, they are related to an individual field of work. Even well-developed personal competencies cannot replace specific, professional competencies, therefore they are determined for individual areas of work (e.g. with a prescribed formal education). Professional recommendations for Slovenian public libraries (Strokovna priporočila in standardi za splošne knjižnice 2019 p. 38) emphasize the focus on the quality of library services. The quality of the library service is based on the responsibility of the librarian in relation to his/her field of work within the library.

2. Research

The research on the modern chosen strategy for the promotion of reading literacy and reading culture, i.e. podcasts, is based on a case study (described in chapter 2.1). Analytical research and action research were used in the case study. Analytical research includes analysis of professional and scientific literature, analysis of data on the accessibility, impact and applicability of the selected modern strategy and analysis of the attitude of professionals to podcasts. Action research includes data obtained by observing the design, preparation, implementation and evaluation of a modern strategy.

The entire research is presented in two papers. The present paper provides a presentation of the framework of the entire research, i.e. a case study of ABC reading literacy podcasts and the results of analytical research on sources and attitudes of professionals towards podcasts. The analytical part of the research stems from a broader study (Fras Popović, 2021; Fras Popović & Vilar, 2022a), which was used to determine the impact of participation in a professional event on the competencies of professionals in the field of reading literacy. A separate paper in preparation (Fras Popović & Vilar, 2022b) presents the design and implementation of action research - observing the design, preparation, implementation and evaluation of podcasts as a modern strategy to promote reading literacy and reading culture - and the second part of analytical research on their accessibility, reach and usability.

2.1. Case Study

The case study is related to a series of fifteen podcasts entitled ABC of Reading Literacy², prepared by the Center for Reading Literacy Promotion of the Maribor Library as part of the promotion of a professional event entitled ABC of Reading Literacy III. The podcasts were primarily aimed at professionals, but were also prepared to encourage reflection on the importance of reading in the wider social environment. This is the first series of podcasts of its kind in the Slovenian library space, which was also the recipient of the national award for an innovative project. The award is given by the Business Association of Slovenian Public Libraries (Knjižnice.si, 2021b). The case study is the design, preparation, implementation and evaluation of this series of podcasts as one of the modern strategies for promoting reading literacy and reading culture. As presented above, analytical research and action research were used in the case study.

2.2. Analytical research

2.2.1. Research problem

The research presented in this paper verifies the thesis: **Before participating in a professional event, professionals detected the podcasts ABC of Reading Literacy in the event promotion and listened to them. The latter influenced their motivation for further work in this professional field, the understanding of their professional and personal role and the understanding of their contribution to the promotion of reading literacy and reading culture. Professionals in the field of promoting reading literacy and reading culture are familiar with this modern strategy and also use it to strengthen their own professional development and professional competencies.**

We start from the assumption that library professionals are familiar with the guidelines for continuous development prepared by IFLA (Varlejs 2016). According to the first principle of these guidelines, which states that "continuous and continuous learning, which continuously improves knowledge and skills, is primarily the responsibility of the library and information professional as an individual", we assume that they accept responsibility for their professional development. to follow the guidelines of development in the field of strategies for the promotion of reading literacy and reading culture.

In the research, we are interested in the connection between the presence of the chosen modern strategy for promoting reading literacy and reading culture on the one hand (i.e. podcasts) and the impact on professionals on the other hand. Determining the impact of participation in a selected professional event has been the subject of two studies (Fras Popović 2021; Fras Popović & Vilar 2022a). Certain findings of the present research are related to the findings of the two studies, namely in determining the connection between podcasts and the competence of professionals.

At the heart of the present research is the issue of the perception of podcasts among professionals who attended a selected professional event. We are interested in the share of participants in the selected professional event (i.e. professionals) who perceived podcasts in the

2 RSS: <https://feeds.simplecast.com/bwsy7qJJ>

promotion of the professional event, listened to them and this is an interesting form of presenting content in the field of reading culture and reading literacy. We would also like to find out the share of participants who learned about these podcasts for the first time only when participating in a selected professional event and the share of those who also follow other podcasts in the field of reading culture and reading literacy or related professional field.

The research also seeks to answer the question of whether listening to and perceiving podcasts by participants before the selected professional event has affected their professional well-being after attending the professional event, their understanding of their professional and personal role, and their contribution to encouragement of reading literacy, as well as a sense of greater competence to promote reading. We defined professional well-being as self-confidence and defined it as the sum of independence and professional self-confidence. We start from the general social belief that self-confidence and self-esteem are the result of a circle of connection between an individual's actions. The better an individual is at something, the higher are his self-confidence and self-esteem. The latter is also related to the degree of independence. So, in our research we start from the point of view that an individual is self-confident, if he/she is independent and professionally self-confident in his/her work.

2.2.1.1. Research questions

We formed four research questions:

1. What is the proportion of participants in the professional event "ABC of Reading Literacy III" who noticed ABC Reading Literacy podcasts in the promotion of the professional event and what is the proportion of participants who listened to the ABC of Reading Literacy podcasts?
2. What is the position of professionals regarding podcasts as a modern form of presenting content in the field of reading literacy and reading culture, and to what extent do they follow other podcasts from this or a related professional field?
3. What is the relationship between the intensity of participation in a professional event (ie daily participation or weekly participation) and listening to one of the ABC of Reading literacy podcasts?
4. What is the connection between listening certain parts of the ABC of Reading Literacy podcasts and a greater sense of competence after participating in the professional event "ABC of Reading Literacy III"?

2.2.2. Methodology

In the research, we examined the possibilities of placing podcasts in the process of promoting reading literacy and reading culture among the adult population, with an emphasis on the target group of professionals. We wanted to find out the attitude of professionals in the field of reading literacy and reading culture to the use of podcasts in their work and the impact of these podcasts in the context of their perceptions of their own professionalism and the scope, impact and usefulness of podcasts. Data (opinions of professionals) were obtained through a survey that was part of a broader survey (Fras Popović 2021; Frás Popović & Vilar 2022a) to determine how participation in professional events affects professionals. The survey of the last professional event "ABC of

Reading Literacy III" also included questions to determine the impact of ABC of Reading Literacy podcasts on individual categories of professional self-confidence and professional well-being of professionals.

The professional event took place between 5 and 8 October, 2021. Podcasts entitled ABC of Reading Literacy were broadcast fifteen Tuesdays before the start of the professional event, i.e. before 5 October, 2021. The first in a series of podcasts was broadcast on June 22, 2021, and the last (the fifteenth) on the Tuesday before the professional event, ie September 28, 2021. Each episode lasted an average of 15 minutes and 21 seconds. The podcasts were related to a professional event, as the purpose of the podcasts was to promote the professional event among professionals.

The responses regarding the inclusion of podcasts in the promotion of professional events and the attitude of professionals to podcasts were obtained with a survey containing five closed questions, which provided feedback on the impact of participation in the professional event "ABC of reading literacy III". The survey was conducted after the professional event, the link to the questionnaire was sent to participants by e-mail on October 20, 2021. The online questionnaire, prepared with the Ika tool, is designed to allow organizers to identify trends for individual segments of the professional event, with claims specific to the content of each event. This time, five closed-ended questions were specific, aimed at determining the perception of podcasts in the promotion of a professional event, the attitude of professionals towards podcasts, and the connection between the perception and listening to podcasts. The remaining questions in the survey aimed at the possible impact of listening to podcasts on certain elements of professional self-confidence, such as motivation, belonging and meaning in connection with participation in a selected professional event.

The questionnaire comprised a total of twelve closed-ended questions. Closed questions had sub-questions. One question with five sub-questions was linked to podcasts. We tried to avoid suggestiveness by reversing the order of questions. As these are nominal variables, the results are shown in percentages.

The first entry in the questionnaire is recorded only twenty minutes after the invitation was sent, i.e. on 20 October at 12:32, the last entry in the questionnaire is recorded on 8 November, 2021 at 13:00.

2.3. Sample

The sample consisted of the participants of the professional event "ABC of Reading Literacy III". This is a purposive sample, as they are representatives of the population of professionals in the field of reading literacy and reading culture. It is a mixed group of librarians, as well as other professions involved in promoting reading literacy and building a reading culture. Since we did not identify demographic characteristics in the questionnaire, from the names of institutions in the box when registering participation in the event itself, we conclude that most of the participants were from the education environment, i.e. from primary and secondary schools. The invitation to participate in the survey and the link to the survey were sent to 427 e-mail addresses, which were obtained by online registration of participants. We sent out the invitation three times and after each invitation we recorded an increased response in solving the survey. 330 respondents started the survey, 180 respondents finished it, and another 18 respondents partially answered it, so we have an

insight into 198 answers of the participants of the professional event. The response rate was therefore 60%.

3. Results

Podcasts have been present in the media landscape for twenty years, or eighteen years, if we take 2004 as the year, which marks the beginning of intensive development events.

Therefore, in our research we were first interested in the share of professional event participants who noticed podcasts, i.e. found information about podcasts in different ways in event promotion (Table 1) and the share of those who also listened to podcasts (Table 1). Table 1 shows us opinions on the perception of podcasts in the promotion of a professional event and the share of listening to podcasts.

Table 1 : Proportion of perception and listening of podcasts

Opinion of perception and listening to podcasts			
	no	yes	total
information on this series of podcasts was first heard or read at the event	52%	48%	n=180
podcasts were perceived in the promotion of a professional event	31%	69%	n=180
they listened to at least one episode in this series of podcasts	42%	58%	n=179

Slightly less than half of the participants, i.e. 48 percent, received their first information about podcasts only at a professional event. The data shows that half of the participants had heard of podcasts before the event as an announcement of a professional event, almost two thirds of participants perceived podcasts in the promotion of a professional event and more than half of participants, i.e. 58 percent listened to one of the podcast episodes (Table 1).

Despite the fact that the beginnings of the development of podcasts are located in 2004, as we learned in the introductory part of this paper, we were interested in the attitude of respondents to this modern strategy. We were interested in the latter mainly because, when planning in the Slovene library space, there was no provider among Slovene libraries who would be aware of the importance of reading culture and reading literacy. The data in Table 2 give us an insight into participants' attitudes towards podcasts.

Table 2 : Attitude on podcasts

Opinion on podcasts			
	no	yes	total
podcasts are an interesting form for presenting content in the field of reading culture and reading literacy	10%	90%	n=179
they follow other podcasts from this or a related field of expertise	60%	40%	n=179

Among the respondents, it is possible to recognize a very positive attitude towards this form for presenting content in the field of reading culture and reading literacy, as 90 percent of respondents answered in the affirmative when asked if this form of interest was interesting. A positive attitude towards this modern promotion strategy is also interesting because monitoring podcasts for respondents is not already common practice. From Table 2, we see that 60 percent of

those who do not follow any of the podcasts available. Whether it is the field of reading literacy and reading culture or a related field.

We prepared podcasts with the aim of promoting the ABC Reading Literacy III professional event. The purpose of the professional event is to strengthen professional competencies. In two previous studies (Fras Popović, 2021 and Frasn Popović, Vilar, 2022b), we determined the impact of professional events on the competencies of professionals who attended these professional events. For the purpose of our research, the data in Table 3, Table 4, Table 5 and Table 6, which are presented in the context of the results of the three-year study, are important. For the purposes of our research, we are only interested in the results of the 2021 survey.

Table 3 shows the pattern of meeting the needs for competence, as we were interested in the impact of a professional event on understanding the professional and personal role of event participants and understanding their contribution to promoting reading literacy.

Table 3: Influence on self-perception of competence

Opinion on the positive impact of the event on understanding	no	yes	total
professional role and contribution to the promotion of reading literacy	3%	97 %	n=182
personal role and contribution to the promotion of reading literacy	2 %	98 %	n=182

Participation in the event helps participants to better understand their professional and personal role, a contribution to the promotion of reading literacy (Table 3). In the following, we will be interested in whether we can connect listening to podcasts before attending a professional event with an individual's understanding of his/her professional and personal role in promoting reading literacy.

Cooperation is one of the fundamental orientations in modern paradigms of various professional and scientific fields. Therefore, we were interested in the attitude of the participants towards cooperation, connection and knowledge of the professional field.

Table 4: Attitude towards cooperation, connection and knowledge of the field

They obtained information at a professional event	no	yes	total
which makes them feel more connected to others in their efforts	15%	85 %	n=181
which make them more supportive of the need for various actors to work together to promote reading literacy	2 %	98 %	n=180

Table 4 reveals that the vast majority of participants received information that made them feel more connected to others (85 percent of respondents) and that supported the need for different stakeholders to work together to promote reading literacy more than before the event. A very positive attitude was taken by almost all respondents, as the share of agreement is at 98 percent.

Professional events are prepared in different spaces in order to promote professional development. We were interested in whether the participants of the selected professional event gained information that affects the professional competencies and self-confidence of the participants.

Table 5: The impact of the professional event on professional competences and self-confidence

They obtained information at a professional event	no	yes	total
which makes them feel more competent to promote reading	7%	93%	n=182
which makes them feel more confident in the work they do	7%	93%	n=182

which they can then transfer into their practice	4%	96%	n=179
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At the professional event, 93 percent of respondents obtained information that makes them feel more competent to promote reading. This is the percentage of those who obtained information at a professional event that makes them feel more confident in the work they do. The share of those who received information at a professional event, which they then transferred to their work environment, is 96 percent higher. We present this information here, as we are interested in the connection between listening to podcasts before participating in a professional event and three indicators of the impact of a professional event on the professional competencies and self-confidence of participants. The three indicators are shown in Table 5, ie the impact on a greater sense of competence to promote reading, a greater sense of self-confidence in the work they do and the transfer to practice.

The participants were able to choose between different intensities of attending the 2021 event, as shown in Table 6. The data is presented here, as one of the research questions is related to determining the relationship between listening to podcasts before a professional event and the intensity of participation in a professional event.

Table 8: Intensity of attending the professional event

They were present at the professional event	no	yes	total
in full, all five days	56%	44%	n=198
first day	58%	42%	n=198
other day	50%	50%	n=198
third day	34%	66%	n=198
the fourth day	47%	53%	n=198
fifth day	63%	37%	n=198

In the research we were interested in the feeling of the individual (in terms of self-confidence) before participating in a professional event and we wanted to gain insight into the individual's self-assessment in the field of professional self-confidence regarding certain professional tasks. Self-confidence, as already presented, was defined in this question as the sum of independence and professional self-confidence. We were interested in their self-confidence regarding the promotion of reading literacy and reading culture, according to the definition of both terms as provided by the National Strategy for the Development of Reading Literacy (Nacionalna 2019).

Table 7: Participants' opinion on their own professional self-confidence before attending the event

Self-confidence of the participants				
	Very self-confident	self-confident	Less self-confident	Total
in promoting reading literacy	15%	66%	19%	185 (100%)
in building reading culture	17%	61%	22%	187 (100%)

Table 7 reveals that the majority of participants in the professional event were those who felt sovereign in promoting literacy before participating in the event (66 percent) and sovereign in building reading culture (61 percent). The data reveal that most participants felt sovereign or very sovereign before attending a professional event. We wondered if those who feel very sovereign in promoting reading literacy are also very sovereign in building a reading culture. With additional analysis, we found that there is a strong positive association between the two categories. Participants, who before the event felt very sovereign (79 percent) in promoting reading literacy, also felt very sovereign in building a reading culture. Strong positive matches were also found in sovereign (83 percent) and less sovereign (77 percent) well-being.

When reviewing the data, we asked ourselves whether the participants, who felt sovereign and very sovereign before participating in such a professional event, gained something by listening to podcasts. At this point, we performed additional data analyses and tried to determine the impact of listening to podcasts. We were interested in whether listening to podcasts before attending a professional event:

- has affected the professional self-confidence of participants before participating in a professional event;
- is related to the understanding of the professional and personal role of the participants in the professional event;
- is linked to the strengthening of professional competences: greater sense of competence for the promotion of reading, self-confidence and transfer to practice;
- influences the attitude towards cooperation, connection and knowledge of the field
- is related to the intensity of attendance at the professional event.

When connecting the data, we paid attention to the different intensities of statistically significant positive associations and markedly negative associations, and we also noted weak associations, although we cannot attribute statistical significance to them. Strong positive associations are claims with less than 1% risk, while significant positive correlations have a risk of less than 2%. Weak positive association can be argued with less than 3% risk.

We found that listening to podcasts before attending an event influenced individual selected factors. However, the perception of podcasts in the promotion of a professional event did not affect any of the selected research items.

In the connection between listening to podcasts before attending a professional event and feeling well before attending a professional event in the field of reading culture construction, but not in promoting reading literacy, we found an important positive link. Participants who felt very sovereign before participating in the professional event in building a reading culture listened to one of the podcasts, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: The connection between listening to a podcast and professional self-confidence before attending

Listening to "ABC of reading literacy" podcasts	Self-confidence of the participants before the event at building reading culture			
	Very self-confident	self-confident	Less self-confident	Total
no	10	48	17	75
	13,33%	64,00%	22,67%	100,00%
yes	21	60	22	103
	20,39%	58,25%	21,36%	100,00%
Total	31	108	39	178
	17,42%	60,67%	21,91%	100,00%

Important positive connection was also found between listening to podcasts and the individual's perception in strengthening professional competences (Table 9), in understanding personal and professional role (Table 10) and during the five-day (full participation) participation in a professional event (Table 11).

Table 9: The connection between listening to podcasts and self-assessment of a sense of competence after an event

Listening to "ABC of reading literacy" podcasts	The impact of a professional event on professional competencies		
	no	yes	total
no	10	65	75
	13,33%	86,67%	100,00%
yes	2	101	103

	1,94%	98,06%	100,00%
Total	12	166	178
	6,74%	93,26%	100,00%

Table 10: The connection between listening to podcasts and self-assessment of the positive impact of the event on comprehension

	Opinion on the positive impact of the event on the understanding of professional role and contribution to the promotion of reading literacy?		
Listening to “ABC of reading literacy” podcasts	no	yes	total
no	5	70	75
	6,67%	93,33%	100,00%
yes	1	102	103
	0,97%	99,03%	100,00%
Total	6	172	178
	3,37%	96,63%	100,00%

Table 11: The connection between listening to the podcast and the intensity of the event attendance

	Attending the event in full, all five days		
Listening to “ABC of reading literacy” podcasts	yes	no	Total
no	26	50	76
	34,21%	65,79%	100,00%
yes	55	48	103
	53,40%	46,60%	100,00%
Total	81	98	179
	45,25%	54,75%	100,00%

Regarding the attitude towards cooperation, connection and knowledge of the field, we found a weak positive connection. However, we found a strong positive connection in the attitude of the participants towards podcasts. Those participants, who noticed podcasts in the promotion of a professional event, listened to one of the episodes in this series of podcasts (Table 12).

Table 11: The connection between noticing and listening to podcasts

	Listening to “ABC of reading literacy” podcasts		
Noticing the “ABC of reading literacy” podcasts	no	yes	total
no	38	16	54
	70,37%	29,63%	100,00%
yes	38	87	125
	30,40%	69,60%	100,00%
Total	76	103	179
	42,46%	57,54%	100,00%

We also found a strong positive association between those who listened to at least one of the episodes in the “ABC reading literacy” podcast series and their attitudes towards other such podcasts (Table 13). Those, who have listened to at least one of the podcasts in question, also follow other podcasts from this field or related fields.

Table 13: The connection between listening to “ABC of reading literacy” podcasts and following other podcasts

	Following also other podcasts from this or related area		
Listening to “ABC of reading literacy” podcasts	no	yes	total
no	56	19	75
	74,67%	25,33%	100,00%
yes	52	51	103
	50,49%	49,51%	100,00%
Total	108	70	178
	60,67%	39,33%	100,00%

4. Discussion

In the study, we have focused on the connection between the chosen modern strategy for the promotion of reading literacy and reading culture and the attitude of professionals towards this strategy. The research was based on a case study that brings a series of podcasts to a specific geographical and library space, with the specific purpose of promoting a selected professional event and content that can help professionals promote literacy and reading culture. In the introductory chapter, we defined the concept of modern strategy in the broadest possible general understanding of this phrase, as a procedure, a way to achieve the goal of increased interest in issues of current literacy and reading culture in the present and in the widest range. We have chosen podcasts among the possible ways, procedures, i.e. strategies that enable us to achieve an important goal. The reason for this decision is the accessibility and frequency and simplicity of podcasts, and especially the focus on the content of the message and not so much on the look itself, which is one of the essential elements of other modern strategies.

From the case study, we found that creating podcasts is a new medium in the library landscape for the purpose of promoting reading literacy in a particular geographical environment and a different approach to presenting the content of a particular event or service. The epidemic with various restrictions certainly had a special impact on the increased incidence of podcasts in the wider area. In the first epidemiological period of limiting physical contact, many public libraries switched to the online provision of materials and content, and in the field of professional and general content, streaming of various categories of events was strongly present. In the case study presented by the ABC reading literacy podcasts of the Maribor Library, they focused on the content instead of appearance and chose podcasts as an appropriate modern strategy. The decision to choose was also influenced by the increasing warning of doctors and paediatricians about the increased negative effects of the use of screen media. The main purpose of the podcasts was to promote the professional event. However, they were designed to bring content that helps professionals in the field of promoting reading literacy and building a reading culture.

In the first research question, we were interested in the share of participants of those participants who perceived the considered podcasts from the case study, so they received information that these podcasts are available for listening. They were able to receive information on the website, on Instagram, Facebook and in the professional magazine *Knjižničarske novice* (Library news). We did not check where they got the information in the research, so we are not interested in the way that led them to perceive these podcasts. We found that a significant proportion, i.e. a good two-thirds of the participants, perceived a series of podcasts as a prelude to a professional event. Although we did not explore the pathways that brought podcasts into the perceptual circle of participants, i.e., that they were aware that these podcasts were present for a specific purpose, we conclude that the chosen communication pathways were appropriate. As part of the first research question, we were interested in the proportion of those participants who also listened to one of the podcasts from the case study. We found that there were really a good half of such participants.

The second research question led us to discover the position of professionals regarding podcasts as a modern form of presenting content in the field of reading literacy and reading culture. We found that professionals have a positive attitude towards podcasts, as only one in ten podcasts is not an interesting form of presenting content in the field of promoting literacy and building reading

culture. Among the participants, two-fifths are those who regularly follow other podcasts in this field and other related fields.

The link between the intensity of the visit (i.e. daily attendance or weekly attendance) and listening to one of the ABC reading literacy podcasts was posed in our third research question. We found that there was a stronger connection between the participants who were present at the event in full, i.e. all five days, and the listening of the podcasts from the case study. A good half of the participants, who attended the event in full, also listened to one of the podcasts from the ABC reading literacy series.

The fourth research question directed us to determine the connection between listening to podcasts from a case study and self-assessment of participants after attending a professional event on whether they feel more competent to promote reading after the event. At this point, we found the greatest connection. Almost all participants who listened to the podcasts from the case study felt that this gave them information that makes them more competent to promote reading.

5. Research limitations

Limitations of our research were identified at the following points:

- We did not check the communication channels that led to the perception of podcasts between the participants of the professional event.
- We did not check the adequacy of the selected communication channels used in the case study to inform professionals about the existence of podcasts.
- We did not further check the attitude towards the content adequacy of the podcasts we included in the research.
- We did not check why some individuals who perceived podcasts in the promotion of a professional event did not listen to them.
- We have not checked demographic data, which would also include the profession, so we do not know whether there is a share of the general population among podcast listeners. We anticipate the latter, as the data on the usability (download and listening) of podcasts exceeds the numbers of participants in the professional event

As this is a case study covering a smaller sample, our research can be an introduction to a possibly more extensive research on the topic of our research question. At the same time, these limitations are the starting point for further research in determining the impact of modern strategy in promoting reading literacy and building reading culture.

6. Conclusions

Public libraries are a dynamic environment where theory and practice often meet, especially in the design of innovative services. Such a connection is represented by the case study described in this article, which includes the design, preparation, implementation and evaluation of a series of fifteen podcasts entitled ABC Reading Literacy.

The starting point of the case study is scientific and professional research, which has led to the placement of podcasts as one of the modern strategies for promoting reading literacy and reading culture in the professional space. We have defined modern strategies as ways or means by which we currently effectively promote a positive attitude among non-readers and readers, or at all establish a relationship with this professional field. In the case of our case study, this is a specific target group,

namely professionals who attended a professional event aimed at strengthening professional competencies.

The purpose of preparing podcasts of the ABC reading literacy series was to establish such a promotion of the professional event of the same name, which will bring a message about the professional event to the professional public, and at the same time enrich the wider social space with another topic from the area of reading literacy and reading culture. Reading literacy as a skill and reading culture as a relationship are extremely important for the functioning of the individual and society, so it is almost mandatory for experts to find strategies that lead such discussions into a wider open social space.

Identifying the consequences of the epidemic on various strategies for promoting reading literacy and building a reading culture is not the purpose of this paper. Nevertheless, the growing incidence of podcasts can also be linked to the consequences of the epidemic. The epidemic also had a certain impact on the increased usefulness of modern strategies or various technological tools in the field of promoting reading literacy and building reading culture. Faced with the situation brought about by the epidemic from the very beginning, many public libraries have transferred traditional content to online access, using mostly one of the modern strategies and technological solutions, which builds on appearance more than on the content itself. In podcasts, content is at the forefront of appearance, and this has been one of the most important triggers for the usefulness of podcasts, even in the case of the present case study.

The case study presents the design, preparation, implementation and evaluation of a series of fifteen podcasts created within the Center for the Promotion of Reading Literacy of the Maribor Library. A series of these podcasts was also awarded the national prize for innovative projects of Slovenian public libraries. The present paper presents the framework of the entire research, i.e. the case study, and the methodology related to the data, which sheds light on the attitude of professionals to the chosen modern strategy for promoting reading literacy and building reading culture. A contribution will follow in the future, which will place these results in the context of the entire case study. We present both a case study and the results of analytical research obtained through a survey among the participants of the professional event. The method used was a survey.

Professionals have an extremely positive attitude towards the chosen modern strategy, i.e. towards podcasts. They find this strategy useful and interesting for content in the field of reading literacy and reading culture. When professionals choose to use podcasts, that is, listening, it is essential that they perceive them. It is therefore important that they receive information about the existence of such podcasts. Professionals use podcasts, are in favour of them, and using podcasts with selected content makes professionals feel more competent to promote reading.

With the present research, which has some limitations and at the same time provides a number of starting points for further research, we try to highlight the thoughtful use of modern strategies in promoting reading literacy and reading culture. The presentation of content on the topic of reading culture and reading literacy with the help of podcasts is more modern, more accessible and reaches beyond the walls of the library or narrow professional circles.

As this is a case study covering a smaller sample, the presented survey and its results are an introduction to a possibly more extensive research on the topic of our research question. Reading literacy and reading culture are the building blocks of society and are therefore often the subject of scientific and professional research.

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