

	<p style="text-align: right;">Date : 08/06/2007</p> <p>"Babies Guidelines" – A presentation of the Guidelines for Library Services to Babies and Toddlers</p> <p>Dr. Ivanka Stricevic Zagreb City Libraries, Medvescak Public Library Zagreb, Croatia</p> <p>Kathy East Wood County District Public Library Bowling Green, Ohio, US</p>
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Abstract

IFLA’s Libraries for Children and Young Adult Section published Guidelines for Children's Libraries Services in 2003. The enthusiastic reception of this document, motivated all of the sections of Division III to cooperate in publishing Guidelines for Library Services to Babies and Toddlers in 2007.

Research related to the importance of literacy experiences for children from birth to age 3 served as the premise for public libraries in particular, to recognize their ability to provide quality materials, programs and services for this young audience, along with their parents and caregivers.

Linking the brain development information with the elements of a lapsit storytime demonstrates the vital role librarians can play in developing literacy skills and “raising readers.”

The Guidelines themselves are introduced along with the Checklist and Best Practices sections.

Linking libraries and early literacy

The mission of the IFLA Libraries for Children and Young Adults Section is to demonstrate the need for quality library service to children of all ages and to offer to libraries throughout the world documentation to support an implementation process. The target audience has been public libraries, but the information is beneficial to any library that serves young people. The Standing Committee drafted *Guidelines for Children's Libraries Services*¹, a brief, but motivating outline of information addressing the need to offer quality services in every size library in every part of the world. The Children's Guidelines debuted in English and Spanish at the IFLA Conference in Buenos Aires in 2004. The Guidelines were well received and have been translated into 18 languages already – with more translations promised. All versions are available on the IFLANET.²

At one of the Division III meetings in 2006, it was felt that another document, substantiating library services to babies and toddlers, should be developed. Participation of all sections within the Division was needed to ensure representation of various perspectives and to cover various needs of the target groups. This partnership supported the overall goals of The United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child³ to support all children in reaching his or her full potential. Today's global society demands all countries to "raise readers" to insure their success as global citizens. The children's library can be an important factor in developing democracy in a society because it can and should empower children for active participation. «Through early access to information and books, creative contacts with peers and pursuing interest in the library, a child learns how to live with others, how to protect his/her own rights while respecting the rights of others».⁴ (The background text..., 2005, p. 4). The ability of participation requires literacy and lifelong learning competences. Key competences for lifelong learning, like communication in the mother tongue, digital competences, «learning to learn» competences, social and civic competences, cultural awareness and expression... are being developed from the earliest age. Reading, literacy

¹ Guidelines for Children's Libraries Services. (2003). The Hague: IFLA.

² www.ifla.org - Go to Activities, click on Sections, #10 Libraries for Children and Young Adults. Scroll to Guidelines for Children's Library Services.

³ Convention on the Rights of the Child. (1989). United Nations. Retrieved April 2, 2007 from <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>

⁴ *The Background text to the Guidelines for Children's Libraries Services*. (2005) The Hague: IFLA. Retrieved April 20, 2007 from <http://www.ifla.org/VII/s10/pubs/guidelines-background-en.pdf>

abilities and pre-reading skills have their roots in the child's early experience at home and in the environment. That is why the availability of library services for babies, toddlers and parents is crucial.

Communication skills are paramount in today's world. The ability to read, write and perform mathematical calculations is still the mainstay of quality education. With the formalization of Early Childhood Education, the development of a child's mental and physical skills through play and active games and language skills, through talking, singing and listening, has proven successful. The development of a curriculum has shown how play, the pleasurable, enjoyable, and spontaneous actions of children and hearing stories read aloud, help children grow and learn.

Recent research has documented the importance of literacy experiences during the first 24 months of a child's life! Brain development researchers say that experience with words, rhymes, music and movement can have significant positive impact on the child's future. And all of these activities can be fun for the child and his/her caregiver!

Libraries can play a significant role by welcoming babies, toddlers and their caregivers, dedicating space with books, toys, blocks, puzzles, comfortable seating and shelves of resources on topics of interest. Designing programs for parents and caregivers about age appropriate materials available through the library and presenting information on topics such as child development, children's literature and connections to community agencies and services available could be most beneficial. And providing baby laptime programs for parents and caregivers with their young child can demonstrate just how to use books, songs, fingerplays and simple movement activities to stimulate early learning.

The traditional storytime meant sharing quality children's books through reading aloud. Studies now verify "reading aloud" as the single most important activity for assuring success in reading. This single literacy experience provides vocabulary building, visual stimulation through the many art forms used in children's books, the concept of a beginning, middle and end as parts of a story and the discipline to direct attention to the book and the presenter. During the first 3 years of a child's life, the brain is constantly changing, reshaping itself with each new experience and creating the foundation for skill building. Think of the brain as a sponge, soaking up experiences and craving stimulation through the senses, including the emotions.

Closer examination of the science of this growth reveals that a storytime in a library can affect many parts of this brain development. Although good children's librarians might not change many of the things they do in a storytime, by studying the research on early brain development, they will more fully understand the importance of many of the activities included within the storytime. For example, at a lapsit storytime, where the parent or caregiver holds the baby in their lap or has the young child cradled near to their body, the intimate relationship with the child is enhanced. The child's sense of value is demonstrated as all the caregiver's attention is directed to this single child. What a wonderful way to build self-worth and self-esteem. Gathering the group and welcoming and calming the group with an appropriate song brings the group together and allows a familiar melody with words to be the recognition of this regular activity in their young lives. Reading aloud an age-appropriate book demonstrates to caregivers what is the best literature to use with this age group and again, offers vocabulary and a sense of story. Reading aloud helps the gray matter of the brain, responsible for attention span and stimulating imagination, to flourish. Using a fingerplay is fun but also assists with language development through repetition and the actions involved can stimulate the cerebellum. When storytime is dismissed, adjourning to an adjacent space filled with child-sized furniture and colorful manipulatives, provides a place for all the senses to be stimulated to assist with learning. If nearby a collection of parenting books and lists of social services are available for adults accompanying the little ones, the environment is considered "rich" in brain stimulation materials. Even a small space can be a haven of learning for parents and caregivers.

In many communities, few places offer space and services for the baby and toddler child. Enter the public library! What a wonderful opportunity for libraries, to be the gathering place, the welcoming place – truly a place for every age child. And what an enriching and satisfying experience for librarians – to see children recognize the library as a special place for them!

The Guidelines as a tool

The *Guidelines for Library Services to Babies and Toddlers* give a broad introduction to the need and purpose for services to this young audience and their caregivers as it relates to the mission of children's libraries. The needs of young children today are discussed and goals for library services are presented. Librarians, and especially those in decision making

positions will find the information helpful in justifying funds for staff, materials and a space within the library dedicated to this young audience. The aims of that document are to empower children's librarianship, to help libraries in various countries throughout the world to implement high quality children's services for the youngest and to provide a tool for both trained and inexperienced librarians who have the responsibility of serving families with babies and toddlers.

Unique to this publication is a Checklist to serve as an assessment and planning tool. The statements range from "valuing services for babies and toddlers equal to adult services" to "providing materials and services for all regardless of disability."

The last section of the Guidelines presents examples of best practices, submitted by each of the sections within Division III. They could be taken into consideration when developing a library services to babies and toddlers in any children's library.