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BIBLIOTECA VIVA - LIVING LIBRARY:

MAKING HISTORY WITH BOOKS AND READING

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From its beginnings, Lively Library has relied on voluntary collaboration from many professionals who helped start the project, and provided new ideas and lessons. In addition to the latter, who are too numerous to mention here, we would particularly like to thank the project's technical team who trained mediators, and prepared texts and documentation:

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Presentation

At his talks for teachers, Rubem Alves, the writer and Unicamp emeritus professor, often says that education will have fulfilled its mission if it succeeds in prompting children to discover the pleasure of reading. But he usually provokes his audience by adding: "Unfortunately, schools destroy the pleasure of reading". In his words, "reading has to be free and easygoing, not something you have to write a report on". So he has been advising city halls to create "reading concerts, in the same way we have piano concerts", whose purpose is none other than entertaining the senses and stirring the imagination - this is what good reading material does.

Abrinq Foundation's Biblioteca Viva (Living Library) Program, which is sponsored by Citibank and executed by A Cor da Letra (Center for Studies, Research and Consulting), has sought to put this idea into practice. Since it was founded in 1994, by a group of writers working with literature for children and young people, this initiative has sought to make children, young people and educators more aware of the endless opportunities that the pleasure of reading can elicit. Readers can visit different places, plunge into the inner lives of other people, see how romantic passions emerge or how smart detectives put the pieces of jigsaw puzzles together on the basis of a few clues.

But if this pedagogical project is to reach its aims, we should learn lessons from the people who took the initiative of spreading books in places ranging from parks or day cares to shelter homes for teenagers in trouble with the law. From the decade-long experience of the Lively Library Program many lessons have been drawn and brought together here as reflections or in interviews.

Through this publication, Abrinq Foundation aims to share practical knowledge acquired from the experience of the Biblioteca Viva Program with people who believe, as we do, that reading is essential to enhance our "reading of the world", who believe that living in a world without books would be no fun at all and that anyone who still does not realize this should open their eyes. Or rather, open their books...



Chief Executive Officer - Fundação Abrinq

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Introduction

The Biblioteca Viva Program was started in 1994 by a group of writers, illustrators and professionals involved with reading and literature.¹ They drew up the initial outlines for the program and worked voluntarily on a pilot project for a year. Prior diagnosis of reading facilities in social and community organizations showed that although many had libraries or reading rooms, their books were not always within reach of the children, many of whom associated books with schools and testing and so saw them in an unfavorable light.

“At first, it was difficult, the children did not want books. They said they were not at school. Later on they began to like stories in books.” (Educator - São José Operário Youth Center - São Paulo)

This initial diagnosis also showed that just donating books would not suffice to ensure that children were given access to reading. There had to be a situation in which educators could help them get to know books and have spontaneous reading become part of their everyday routine, in which a child could read and / or listen to stories for pleasure, without any ensuing task or duty to perform.

“Now we have story time every Tuesday and Thursday. They bring books to read the stories to their friends; many have even bought books.” (Educator - São José Operário Youth Center - São Paulo)

The Biblioteca Viva Program was taken up by Abrinq Foundation for Children and Teenagers Rights, with financial support from Citibank, in 1995. The main aim was to help create public reading policy that ensured access to quality books for everybody,

¹ The founding members of the Project were Ricardo Azevedo, Lia Zatz, Liliana Iaccoca, Graça Segolin, Nora Krawczyk, Marli Batista Siqueira Leite, Cíntia Carvalho and Márcia Leite.

but particularly children and young people in risk situations² and their families. The program was also extended outside the city of São Paulo and introduced in another ten states in Brazil.

One of the characteristics of the project is not to restrict its scope, since reading is transversal with education, health, culture and all the other spheres required for individual development in child, teenagers and adults. The more books there are available to the communities (in any of the spaces where people circulate), and the more individuals there are with developed sensibility in relation to reading, the more new readers will emerge. In other words, reading in the sense we are using the term here is a much broader concept than literacy. In fact it both precedes and goes beyond literacy.

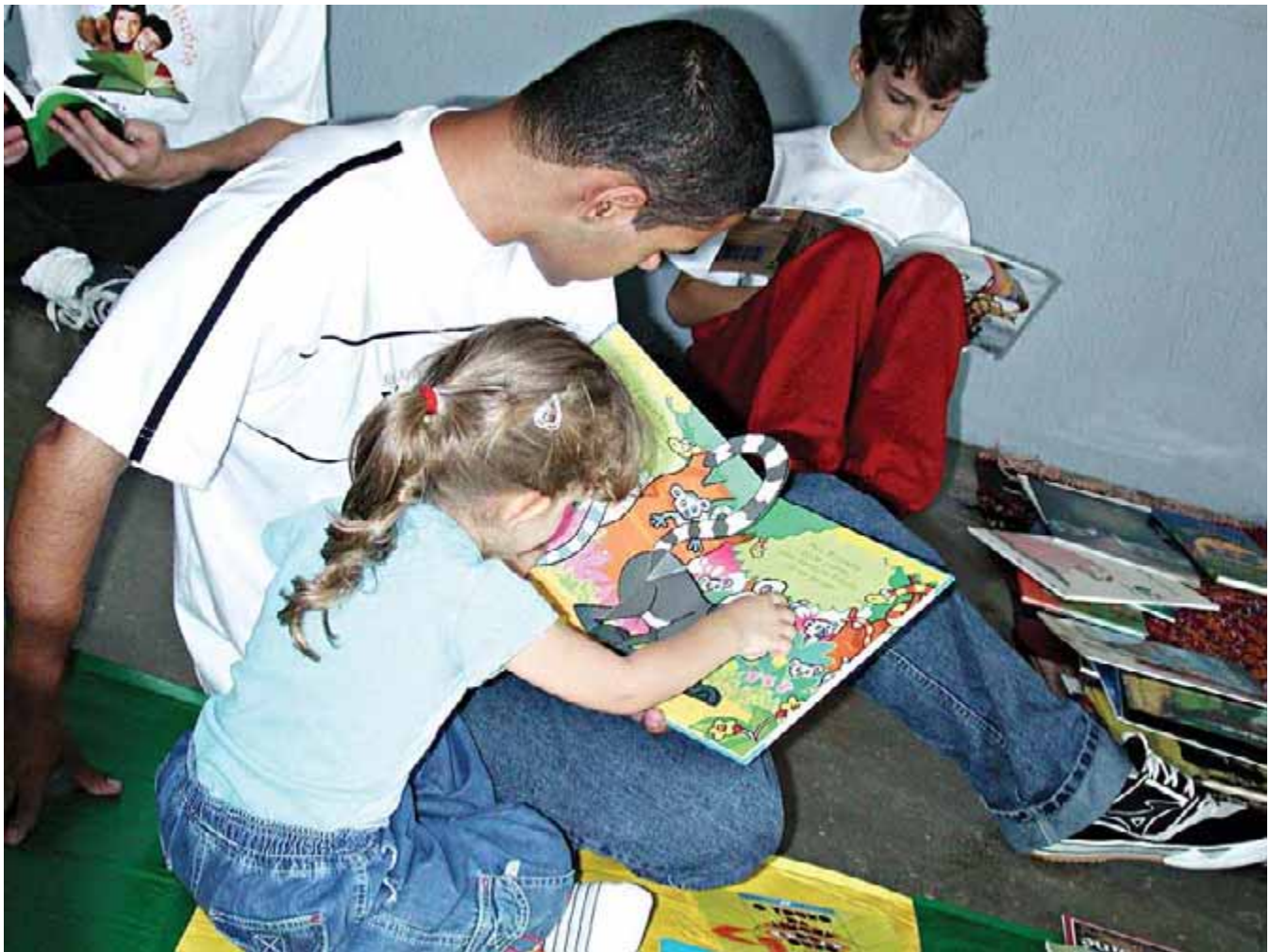
“It is wonderful to see literature in a new and simple way, using it to draw out what a child already has. The program was a novelty for the children. Now they have a different feeling about books, they seem them as another means of self-expression. They know they will find questions raised on things in life, and answers too, in books. Now they are reading Italo Calvino’s Italian Fables and I have been reading with them too. They chuckle, laugh out loud, comment on each situation.” (Educator - Community center - Betim MG).

Institutions reached were given a selection of high quality children’s or young people’s books, at the same time as their educators were given training as reading mediators. These educators accepted a commitment to the institution and the community to transmit ideas from their course to other employees or educators.

During the 1995-2002 period, the Biblioteca Viva Program started 293 libraries in social institutions, schools, day-cares and socio-educational programs. It thus reached 78,000 children and young people and their communities. As the project was started at each new institution, it was monitored through reports and supervision meetings for a year after the mediators had been trained.

² Risk situation here means one in which: a) children and young people have no assurance of their basic rights (subject to violence, abuse, child labor, have no education or healthcare services guaranteed, and all kinds of discrimination and social exclusion); b) children and young people who due to health or physical or mental disadvantage have had their overall development affected; c) children who through different situations of loss (broken family , unemployment, disease or loss of parents) experience for a certain period a major lack of caring and affectionate dedication that are so necessary for their physical, emotional and cognitive development and to understand and deal with the adversity to which they were exposed.

“When the books came, the children were very curious, because some had never read a story. On beginning the activities we always read to the children, but we always make them feel at ease, particularly in the choice of books. We are getting excellent results. Parents love the project; they are always praising the work and more importantly getting involved in the project by telling and reading stories. Today we have a Biblioteca Viva Program center where we can reach the whole community. We have sessions in the workshops and the library where we are sure to get a good audience together.” (Educator - Associação Cata-ventos - Brasília - DF)



New projects emerged due to the experiences developed and the interest expressed by different partners

- A Jovens Mediadores (Young Mediators) Program was run in partnership with Colégio Equipe, a private school in the city of São Paulo, where secondary pupils qualified as reading mediators and did voluntary work with children associated with a series of institutions or organizations in slums or the low-income city outskirts.

- The Biblioteca Viva no Museu (Lively Library in Museums) Program, April - December 2000, in partnership with the Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo (MAM). Young people from different social institutions acted as reading mediators in a city park (Ibirapuera), so books were seen in a public place, and worked with people of different ages and socio-cultural levels.

- The Biblioteca Viva em Hospitais (Lively Library in Hospitals) Program, in partnership with the Ministry of Health, was aimed at the public hospital network (local acronym SUS) and associated with pediatric care. This measure started a center where professionals from these hospitals train as multipliers and introduce the project in their own units, where they help other professionals or volunteers to intervene in hospital routine, with the intention of benefiting not only the children reached but their relatives and others close to them.

- The Mudando a História (Changing History) Program, in partnership with Nokia and International Youth Foundation, works with reading mediator training for young voluntary workers from different institutions (public schools, private schools, social organizations etc.), for the period 2001-2003.



Mãe botou um ovo!



A...





Part I

Places to read in

Places to read in

The Biblioteca Viva Program sees reading as part of people's lives and believes it can become a natural and everyday experience spontaneously sought by everybody in the community. This means books have to be accessible and reading has to be demystified and not seem as just formal learning for privileged people and places. That is why the Biblioteca Viva Program was introduced in all sorts of places, including parks, squares, museums, hospital rooms, schools and waiting rooms.

The versatility of the Biblioteca Viva Program and its simplicity of the methods used are well suited to these different contexts. What characterizes this versatility is the possibility of fostering human development through cultural transmission across groups and generations and the simplicity of the structure of the project, which needs only someone able to start the work, a space where the activity can be developed and the possibility of the mediator obtaining books.

A Living Library

The original meaning of the word library has been retained over the centuries as a place where books are stored, protected and conserved. Libraries are still one of the ways we have found to organize, classify and spread the knowledge accumulated by humanity.

But a library is much more than a place where books are stored. It can conserve and transmit ideas, thoughts and culture from books too. Each library has its own role and its own audience and has to be designed for the people who will be using it children, teenagers, educators and employees. Nobody denies that books have to be stored somewhere. Storing books and keeping them in good condition is very important, precisely so that they can be read, browsed, looked at and appreciated more often, so that a greater number of people can enjoy them, be entertained, be informed, or be touched by them.

So we have to see libraries as attractive places where people can not only do their reading, but also exchange ideas, discuss, hear stories, laugh at them etc. In particular, the Biblioteca Viva Program aims to introduce a concept of the library as a space where children are active in the construction of their knowledge and in producing their culture. A mediator is a person that can facilitate the construction of this “living library.”

When reading, children take in a lot of new information and different feelings and they may feel the need to express themselves and say what they thought or what they felt. The library space has to allow them to express this desire to talk over ideas with classmates or with the educator. The mediator has an important role here in allowing self-expression or in respecting silence. Stories can facilitate contacts and favor the development of the imagination. They can help settle conflicts, mobilize the child’s emotions, promote development when it is blocked, in short they can foster cultural enrichment through a media that is a heritage of the whole of humanity. The central meaning here is recovering the notion of the value and importance of narratives. Narratives are a very special means of communication because they open up a dialogue among everyone around them mothers and children, teenagers, young people and educators. Books are bearer and upholders of narratives in our culture. They embody the gift of bringing people together and communicating vitality, no matter what our origin, training or professional experience.

“When the children return the book, they are so anxious to get another that they ask us when they can get another book everyday. Take 4-year old Leonardo. He even says that his mom tells him the story on the bus. This means that when he goes out with his mother she takes his book-friend along.”
(Educator from Casa da Criança Sousas - Campinas - São Paulo)

1 • Social organizations and socio-educational projects

Initially the Biblioteca Viva Program was available for social organizations directly involved in providing assistance for children and young people³. In this phase, it trained professionals selected by organizations who then spread the ideas

³ Refers to day cares, shelters, projects assisting boys and girls in street situations, NGOs etc.

to other employees and educators. Institutions were also given a collection of selected books) children's and young people's literature) and their families were involved too - the children first had access to the books at parents' meetings, in waiting rooms or at home with children; the parents noticed changes in the children, they saw that books helped at school and in life in general and were delighted with the possibility of them reading.

“Saturdays, Mondays and Wednesdays we get together a mixed group of children from the neighborhood and others that frequent the Foundation. The average is around 40 children. The teachers have noticed more interest in reading and the need for the schools to have Reading Clubs - since they have no libraries.” (Educator with community association Pirquins/Fundação Ipanemense de Cultura - Presidente Olegário - MG)



1.1 • Projects for youths in trouble with the law or in street situation

In institutions that assist young people in trouble with the law it was noticed that many of them did not attend school or that their educational process was fragmentary. In many cases the youths experienced difficulty in reading and initially showed rejection of any project that involved books.

“I work with two different populations teenage offenders on probation and teenagers in occupational schools who are not offenders. Pictorial books have helped to show us, as educators, different visions of the world of these teenagers. Teenage offenders made up a robbery story from an illustration in a book, the youths on occupational training schemes made up a romance from the same illustration. This has helped us achieve better understanding of the population we are working with. If we understand how they see the world, it is much easier to communicate and review our work with these teenagers.”
(Educator - COMEC - Campinas - São Paulo)

During the work, the teenagers became interested in reading and started to care for and appreciate books as affective objects.

“One girl who has been living on the streets for years is not associated with any activity, not even the healthcare facility. The first thing she does when she comes to Quixote is get a book. She spends hours reading, takes the book on the street, where she lives, and always returns it.” (Educator, Quixote program - São Paulo)

Some institutions adopted the strategy of involving families, with readings for parents and letting children take books home once a week. Others place books in a waiting room, where everybody can look at them and read comfortably. In this context literature and reading assist young people and children in expressing themselves and talking about their lives

“It is Thursday again so we have another meeting of the Family Guidance Group. Tomorrow is Mothers Day. The discussion is on drug use and children on probation after robbery, theft or drug dealing. Rita

is very cheerful, because her son sought help and joined an evangelical church. Cleo is not sure whether her son is using drugs or not. However, she often has a feeling of rage in relation to him and when this happens, she feels her son is becoming distant from her. The issue mobilizes feelings of rage in parents faced with children's inappropriate behavior. I excuse myself and tell them I am going to get a present I would like to give them for Mothers Day. I come back with the book Mamãe, você me ama? (Mom, do you love me?) by Bárbara M. Joose, publisher Editora Brinque Book. The group comes closer to listen to the story and, while I read, I feel that they are all very moved. Pedro says that his feelings in relation to his son are similar to those of the mother who is the main character in the book. Ana and Joana are silent, but their eyes are filled with tears. Rita says her son asked her if she liked him as she used to before [being convicted]. And she says she answered that she now liked him more, because she struggled so much for him to come home.” (Educator, Comec - Campinas - São Paulo)⁴

For children and young people in the street situation, books and reading also led to important results.

I have been carrying the Biblioteca Viva Program for “street education” in a colored case that holds several books. The boys and girls themselves choose what they want to read. The activity has been gaining ground in education for street children, who are increasingly interested in reading and literacy work has grown. Some moments were very special and strong, such as when we read the book Roberto do Diabo and of the classic kids stories they chose. The books are read quickly and always swapped and there is a mood of expectation when new books come. We also started to hold longer readings, which was very unusual before the Biblioteca Viva Program was introduced.” (Street Educator Axé program - Salvador - Bahia)

⁴ All names of children, young people and adults used in the statements are fictitious.

2 • Schools

The Biblioteca Viva Program was introduced in public schools in both urban and rural areas. In Brazil, the school is often where children have their first access to books. However, the libraries in these areas are often exclusively oriented to formal learning activities such as school research work and activities such as interpretation and understanding school texts. Moreover many teachers have a heavy workload and a program to get through. With the type of pedagogic training they have been given, they see difficulties having reading mediation as part of school routine, which is understandable. However we also know that in many regions schools are the only places that can provide books and can adults with sensibility in relation to reading. In most cases in which teachers or professionals in the reading rooms adopt this practice as part of everyday routine for children, there have been significant results, as shown in the quotations below

“On Monday, March 8th, two students from year three came into the library, sat down and starting browsing some books in the morning break period. So I asked them if they would like me to read to them. They were surprised but said yes. There was time to read two books. They came back the next day and brought along three friends; on the third day, there were twelve of them; and twenty-three on the fourth; by the fifth day there were more than the library could hold! It was all very quick, I didn’t even have to

go round the classrooms to ask them to attend, and they spread news themselves. I think they like listening; they prefer it to playing in the yard at break time. Some come once in a while; others turn up everyday. Some even grumble when the bell goes and they have to end the reading session.” (Teacher - (municipal school) EMEF Sebastião de Aguiar Azevedo - Ribeirão Preto - São Paulo)



“A mother told me that one of her daughters did much better at school after she acquired the habit of reading; she said her compositions and writing in general was much better and she had been praised by the teacher, who now recommends her pupils to use the library.” (Educator - Associação Cata-ventos - Brasília - DF).

2.1 • Rural Schools

The project was introduced to rural communities, schools located on rural workers' settlements and community centers in remote areas. Since these communities are distant from urban centers, the children have no access to public libraries and other cultural spaces. In this context, books give children contact with different texts and illustrations. In many cases, their parents have no schooling and there are no books or written materials in their homes.

“The children were initially a little shy, but soon became excited with reading. The small ones stood on their chairs to read to the others. There was even rivalry to see who would read. One child, Rosana, read for her mother who cannot read.” (Educator at a community center in a rural neighborhood in Paraibuna - SP)



3 • Lively Library in Hospitals

The Biblioteca Viva Program was taken to hospitals with pediatric services with the aim of humanizing the hospital environment and assisting children hospitalized or attending clinics. The goal is to use reading to contribute to better relations between patients and healthcare professionals. The project prioritizes children as the focus of its attention and allows them to choose and actively participate in the proposed activity. It also involves parents and employees, providing important exchanges and experiences based on children's narratives and books.

“Five-year-old J. was in hospital for a blood transfusion. His illness made him feel more need for affection. Everyday I went there to read stories but he was not receptive. He did not even want me near him, he was very nervous and aggressive; I gradually got closer to him by telling stories and talking to him. Later, he let me take his hand for the serum. Later, when he was already getting better, I arrived and he jumped into my lap..., asking if there would be another story. I read the short story Tanto Tanto and he asked if he could hug and kiss me. I was embarrassed, because I would have to hug him and kiss him. And every day he hugged and kissed me. Even before breakfast, he was already asking me to open the box and pass him the books.” (Hospital doctor-Santa Casa, Anápolis - 10/23/2002)

The mediators are employees and volunteers from the hospitals specially trained for this activity who volunteered to carry out this task as part of their routine work in hospitals, in clinics, infirmaries and specialized treatment centers. One of the characteristics of the activity in hospitals is the fact that the children are always accompanied by adults (parents or relatives) who also enjoy being read to and notice the how the children respond favorably to reading stories. This often leads to the reproduction of this activity in the home and the desire to have access to books.

“We had a case in that the doctor had just told the mother that the daughter would be interned in the emergency room, because she had pneumonia. The mother was crying, the baby was very small, and we began to talk to her and to tell stories for other children, and she began to take an interest; she asked us

to tell her one. A.C. began to read the story and the mother stopped crying. The effect on the mother was greater than for the child.” (Santa Casa de Limeira)

In an institution that has a busy routine and a very large numbers of people working and circulating on the premises, the introduction of a project that intervenes in routine causes initially causes a certain bafflement and requires employees to make an effort to adapt. By working alongside the reading mediators in the activity during a child’s treatment, professionals see that reading facilitates their work so there is more acceptance of the individual and often of the treatment too.

“Illness causes children to mature. They cannot say no to the medication, or to the doctor. When we make room for the imaginary, the child’s choices and opinions emerge.” (Occupational therapist, Instituto da Criança - SP)

Some health care staff also realized that reading mediation could assist them in their everyday caring.



“I had a very nice experience with a doctor who was here. He came to tell us that a child has spent three days without speaking. She didn’t speak to anybody, she didn’t want to see him, but he had to treat her. So he asked me to read to this child. I was reading to her for eight or ten days. I read the same book ten times. By the third day the girl was saying “Hi, pal.” And we were talking to the doctor. I think reading has an immediate effect on children.”
(Nurse, Hospital Pequeno Príncipe - Curitiba - Paraná)

3.1 • Institution for children with special needs

The Biblioteca Viva Program was also taken to institutions for children and young people with special needs such as autistic children, psychotics, and those with hearing impairments, Down syndrome or retarded psychomotor and language development. Reading mediation for these children was performed by professionals at the institutions such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and hearing therapists and psychoanalysts. Children varied in their responses to mediation But in general showed great interest in books and reading, asked for repetitions of the same stories, and established closer relations with professionals during reading sessions.

“We began reading with an intensive therapy group [...]. This group is composed of six children aged 7 - 9 (four boys and two girls), and we have been systematically working with stories. [...]

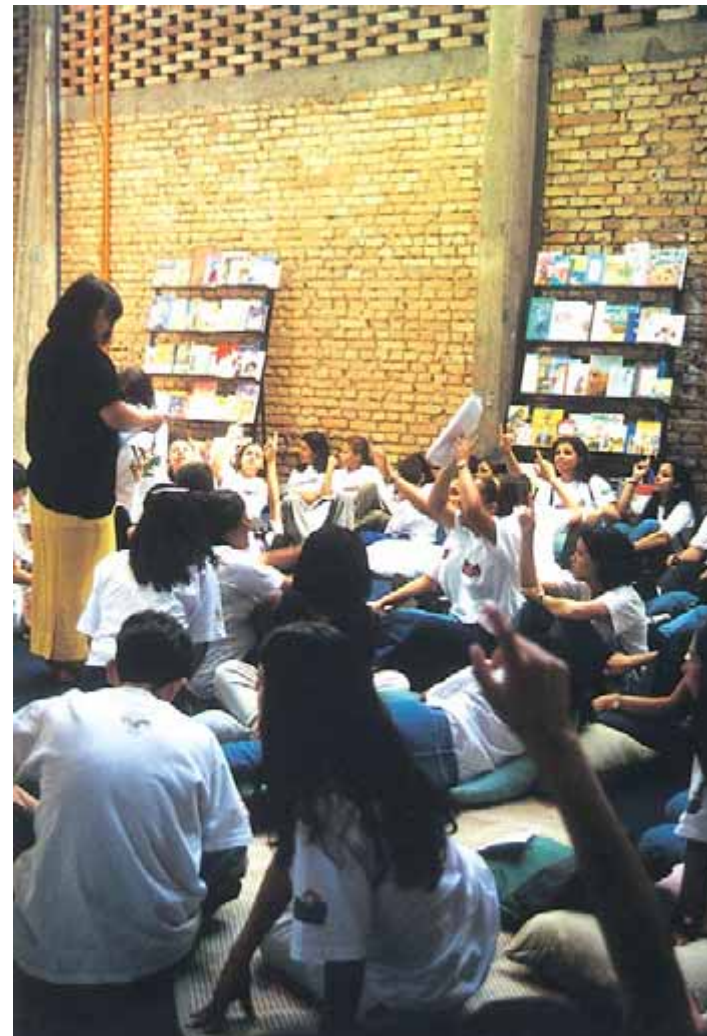
I felt that reading gradually made them calmer and more relaxed. In some sessions they lay on the floor to listen, moved closer to the mediators and exchanged books, or even tried to peer at the illustrations from a distance. [...] In this group, at the moment, at least three children have already chosen the book they want to hear and asked us to read it several times. So we use the same books for several sessions, and we have seen that they have more facility for interacting with the mediators and sometimes with other children in the group. [...] we saw how stories were important to recover their disconnected childhoods and periods spent alone, and helped them try to overcome, in some way, their enormous difficulties in seeing themselves in affective terms and in accepting the other in their lives” (- Center for Research in Psychoanalysis and Language - Recife - PE).

“Cláudia (aged 16) was embarrassed when she came into the room and found books on the table. She has Down’s syndrome and great difficulty with speech; so she communicates more through gestures. But this does not prevent her from taking part in all activities. I told the story Adeus passarinho (Good-bye little bird). She thought it funny and wanted me to tell the whole story. After we finished, I asked her to choose another book to read. She chose Papai chegou (Dad’s home). She thought the illustrations were beautiful, the cat, made meow, showed the key and apple and used gestures to communicate that she knew that apples were for eating. Then I gave her the book to explore. She imitated the way I had told the story, and the way I had held the book and showed it to her friends. The interesting point was her perception, the way she saw books and how she moved to get them. (Fundação Ecumênica de Proteção ao Excepcional - Curitiba - PR)

4 • Public spaces

In public spaces such as parks, gardens and squares, the mediators choose an appropriate place (under a tree, under a marquee, on the lawn). They lay a rug for books and cushions and draw a very varied and unexpected audience, big or small at times, always changing according to the hour or day. The simple fact of organizing the location contributes to attract people’s attention and curiosity.

*“We’re back, at last! And even better, in the same corner as before! Today it was very good; the park was full of children! I read for two whole hours for Maria, a Japanese girl who loves books, who had gone to the park with her grandmother. She liked many of the stories, but most liked the book *Eu quero meu penico* (I want my potty). Even when I read *Eu quero meu jantar* (I want my dinner), she remained set on*



listening to I want my potty another three times. In fact she did not want to leave. She only left because her grandma called her. Here in the park Maria was the first that led me to see the happiness a story can bring a child from the new generation born amid computers, videogames etc.” (Young Mediator - State School Filomena Matarazzo)

The situation of reading in public spaces is very different from what we see in institutions. Mediators are available to read for children walking or playing who do not know each other. They have to make initial contact and conquer them to begin the work of mediation. Children are usually with their parents and they often come back with the children to participate in activities. As the spaces are open, many adults approach too and observe the development of the mediation. Many are seen to like reading even more than the children, and this may mean they are encouraged to read to their children.

“Our first work was exceptional, the children loved it, but it was hard to know who was more interested, the parents (particularly mothers) or the children. The mother of a pretty little girl did not want to leave. Her husband called her but she stayed. I noticed that the children only paid real attention to the highly colored books, particularly those that “came apart” or, opened to show a bug etc. I think our work should be taken to more parks. Ibirapuera Park is really tremendous. “(Mediator - CEC São Paulo Apóstolo)

This experience in the Biblioteca Viva Program was initially developed only by young reading mediators originating from different neighborhoods in the city of São Paulo. In addition to the results described above, the work gave the young people involved a wide range of new experiences, not necessarily related to reading mediation. They learned how to get about in the city and met people from other cultures and social groups. They discovered and appropriated different public spaces.



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Part II

Theoretical basis

Theoretical basis

1 • Cultural action

Cultural action is a process that offers conditions for the people involved to discover their ability to create, invent and reinvent their aims, as long as activities are not imposed on them or steered to reach certain results. In other words, it is possible to know how and with what means this action begins and develops, but it is not possible to know what the outcome will be, often happening unexpectedly or being shown in situations in the future. One of the main characteristics of cultural action is that it has a beginning but cannot have an end. It respects participants' free will, individual pace and freedom of expression; it does not pose limitations on form or language, allowing different approaches and different readings of the same object or situation, but constantly opens new roads for people to discover and choose what they want by themselves.⁵

Cultural action creates conditions and opportunities for people to develop their ability to observe, reflect, doubt, ask questions and speak freely on the basis of their own daily experience. It is a process that causes transformations and feeds its own change, prompting people to change the way they see themselves and the world around them, so that they are not restricted to pat solutions and conventions and start to see beyond their immediate surroundings.

It is important to grasp the significance of cultural action, since there is a widespread idea of reading as always associated with formal learning, which is one of the aims in education. Although it contributes to educational development and facilitates the literacy process, this is not the focus or main aim of cultural action. Everybody knows that culture and education go together. They complement, combine and help each other. Children that have early contact with the world of books and reading have much more stimulus to learn to read and write. They acquire greater ability for abstraction in the same way that they want to discover the rules and secrets when coming into contact with a new toy or a new game.

⁵ See Teixeira Coelho. O que é ação cultural [What cultural action is]. São Paulo, Brasiliense, 1989. Coleção Primeiros Passos.

This is precisely what the Biblioteca Viva Program proposes: to include the children in the world of reading through cultural action that may occur in any social space - family, school, day care or hospital - and to include children without expecting them to respond immediately with a gain or outcome. This is how learning takes place in people's lives. They learn how to walk, talk and play through relations with others. They interact, learn through trial and error, experiment, and go back to earlier stages. The same applies to reading. Children who interact with adult readers incorporate this practice to their lives. They start to see reading as something that is part of everyday life and therefore find it easier to learn reading and writing, since they perceive the significance and meaning of these activities. So cultural action developed through reading to children from their first months of life will surely facilitate the learning process. For a child that never saw a book, it is an object like any other with which one can play, explore with the hands, the mouth, the sense of smell, or the eyes. It is the adult that lends meaning to a book through reading and interaction with the child. In reading families, children are born amid newspapers, books and magazines. On seeing an adult reading, the child knows that that this book-object conveys stories and words. The child starts to take an interest in the codes that the letters represent. It is therefore crucial for children to have early access to this multiplicity of forms and types of literary books.

But children from families where reading is not a common practice will usually have their first contact with books only when they go to school or day care.

Reading mediators will be agents for this cultural action. They will practice the act of reading in a free and unrestricted manner so that each child can enjoy these books and these moments in whatever way they like. For many children, this reader is the first person to put a book in their hands and initiate them in the world of reading.

2 • Reading and social inclusion

Until the first half of the 20th century, children's reading was restricted to small sections of the elite. In Brazil, it was not until the late 60s and early 70s of the last century that more concern developed in relation to the habit of reading to children and young people.

Significantly more children's literature has been produced in Brazil as the school system has expanded. School is still the main channel for most publications for young people and children. The school has been attributed the role of having children start reading and converting them into readers. Even with the growth in the school system, the creation of children's libraries and the literacy-teaching movements that developed as of the second half of the last century, approximately 12% of the population aged over 10 are illiterate. Around one half of the population has from one to seven years of schooling, which means they have not completed basic education.⁶

There is still a large contingent of functional illiterates, or people who were literate at school but are not capable of understanding what they read in books, newspapers or other types of written texts, even the most elementary ones. In so far as they have no ability to use written information, which is a crucial requirement for employment and social processes, these individuals become socially excluded.

Instituto Paulo Montenegro and Ação Educativa (Educational Action) announced the first data for the National Indicator of Functional Literacy on December 13, 2001.

- * 31% of the sample were classified as literacy level 1 (able to extract explicit information only from very short texts);
- * 34% were level 2 (could also locate non-explicit information in longer texts);
- * 26% were rated literacy level 3 (capable of reading longer texts, locating more than one piece of information and relating different elements of the text);
- * 37% of Brazilians read nothing at work;
- * 41% do not write anything;
- * women scored better on tests with an average 11.4 against 10.3 for men.⁷

⁶ IBGE, PNAD, 2001.

⁷ available at URL: www.ipm.org.br -- website of Instituto Paulo Montenegro.

Data from the survey *Qualidade da educação: uma nova leitura do desempenho dos estudantes da quarta série do ensino fundamental* (“Quality of education: a new reading of the performance of fourth year students in elementary education”) conducted by the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research (local acronym Inep), show that the teaching-learning process is precarious for many children in Brazil. Most pupils do not learn to become readers to deal with basic everyday activities, become part of a complex globalized society or fully exercise citizenship.⁸

Modern life increasingly requires individuals able to read and write. Reading is an instrument for personal development and the exercise of citizenship. In their everyday lives, people have to read newspapers, magazines, labels on medications, instructions for using appliances, pamphlets etc, - not to mention professional or occupational activities in which the ability to use information from different media, such as books, newspapers, specialized magazines, or computers, is a basic prerequisite.

Bernardo Toro notes that to compete for a better position in life, young people must master reading and writing skills. They must be able to do calculations and solve problems; analyze, synthesize and interpret data, facts and situations; understand and act in their social surroundings; interpret media content critically; be able to locate, access and use accumulated information better, and learn how to plan, work and decide in groups (*Código da Modernidade*).⁹

Brazil has one of the highest levels of social inequality in the world. In order to change this situation, people must become readers with the competence to understand and intervene. However, schools, particularly in the public system, have largely failed to educate the kind of individual required by the corporate world or convey the knowledge required for social and economic change.

Any approach to forming young readers in Brazil must tackle the difficulties facing young people and children from the less favored groups in society. Their families do not normally have access to reading. Books, newspapers or magazines are not usually seen in their homes, although writing is considered necessary.

⁸ *Qualidade da educação: uma nova leitura do desempenho dos estudantes da quarta série do ensino fundamental* [Quality of education - a new interpretation of the performance of fourth grade pupils in elementary education]. National Institute for Educational Studies and Research (local acronym Inep/MEC). This study was based on the results of the National Basic Education Evaluation System (local acronym SAEB) in 2001.

⁹ COSTA, A.C.G. *Códigos da Modernidade in Protagonismo juvenil: adolescência, educação e participação democrática*. [Codes of modernity in young people's affirmation: - adolescence, education and democratic participation] Salvador: Fundação Odebrecht, 2000.

Living in this environment means that when the child reaches school age, it will have more difficulty in coping with written language, unlike children from families that attach importance to reading.

Children from non-reading families face a huge leap from oral to written language at school. Even among middle-class families with access to books, there is a large contingent of parents who do not place value on reading and attribute this attitude to the predominant lifestyles in modern society, where time is short and there are many other leisure options. Children from these families tend to reproduce parental behavior and become non-readers.

Emília Ferreiro, at *Cultura escrita e Educação*¹⁰ (Written culture and education), asserts “in Brazil, 50% of children fail at the end of the first year. [...] It is impossible to build a country if half the population is not able to read. Furthermore, it is very serious when a country has got used to the idea that half the population is unable to learn. [...] As long as the idea prevailed that learning was for a few and not for all, schools knew what they had to do. However with the acceptance of the idea of literacy for everybody, schools were unable to respond. Schools do not know how to work with differences. They do not know how to work on the basis of differences assumed to be a given or inevitable premise, and not a punishment.”

Another factor that cannot be ignored is the way schools tackle literature. Many public and private schools do not develop readers because they are not always prepared for working with literature. An activity that should be pleasurable and unrestricted becomes didactic, compulsory, impersonal and utilitarian, and children shun



¹⁰ FERREIRO, E. *Cultura escrita e educação* [Written culture and education]. Porto Alegre: Artes Médicas, 2001.

books as symbols of educational failure.¹¹ Brazil as a nation does not appreciate books. There are few cultural policies that encourage reading or provide subsidies for producing low-cost books to facilitate access to our cultural heritage.

Finally, those who succeed in overcoming all these obstacles to becoming readers through their own personal efforts, do so only to meet with another obstacle: books are very expensive and there are few public libraries in the major urban centers.

Jean Foucambert writes: “a reader is not someone who reads a book they were asked to read, but someone who creates their own means of choosing books they will read, someone who knows ways of finding and diversifying texts associated with their interests.”¹² Readers understand the meaning of what they read and are capable of reflecting on and having an opinion on it, and deriving relationships between the content of the text and everyday life.

As the first agencies to introduce books into children’s lives, schools could prioritize reading without making it compulsory, which often leads to students feeling indifference in relation to books.

“From the personal point of view, it changed everything, I didn’t have many stories read to me when I was a child or at school. I always read because I had to. The teacher asked me to read and I did, but now I have discovered the pleasure of reading so I can show children something nice, an emotion that I didn’t have before the course. I read the story because it was time to read and that was all there was to it. “

There must be a search for practices that favor the construction of a new image of reading as a pleasurable and entertaining activity. Reading is a crucial instrument for human and personal development, for the formative process and for the full exercise of citizenship.

Just as children are plunged into the world of oral expression early by hearing people talking around them before they learn to speak themselves, they should be prompted to have intensive and natural contact with the universe of writing even before knowing how to read and write.¹²

¹¹ In this respect see Ricardo Azevedo. Aspectos da literatura infantil no Brasil, hoje. [Aspects of children’s literature in Brazil today] URL: www.ricardoazevedo.com.br

¹² See Jean Foucambert. A leitura em questão [Reading in question] Porto Alegre: Artes Médicas, 1994.

Contact with books and stories involves a certain trajectory and requires a certain development that has its own sequence. If the pace of each individual and the right to just listen is respected, this development is usually faster and more soundly based. In order to become a reader, one has to want to be a reader. If we are to want something, it has to be introduced in an interesting and pleasurable manner.

3 • The importance of reading stories and the reason for choosing literature

“Stories help people that read them in some way that I have yet to discover. I just know that they touch them deep down and that is why people like them. And some stories really happened and are part of us. They are our life. Events that made us think. But they are always strong because they mark our personality, our knowledge of ourselves or facts that made us laugh; or cry; or just made us think”¹³.

Reading is an intimate and highly elaborate exercise that requires psychic development. It is interesting that when we observe the child’s relationship with books and reading we find needs that are shared by most people: an interest in listening to narratives; the need for the company of an adult who will make time to read a narrative; the desire for self-expression, to be listened to, and to be respected in one’s periods of silence.



¹³ MUNDURUCU, D. Meu avô Apolinário: um mergulho no rio da (minha) memória [My grandfather Apolinário - a plunge into the river of (my) memory]. São Paulo: Editora Studio Nobel, 2001.

In our age, the book is the material vehicle for narrative language. In relation to childhood, for instance, its main function is to ensure the transmission and continuity of the stories of our culture.. Adults have an important role because they reconstitute written narratives through their voice, by reading and presenting images. For the child, adult company is valuable in contact with contents and images that may be shocking or disturbing, or be unknown factors, either because the child is still very small, or because it does not yet know how to read, or because it has not yet achieved autonomy in relation to reading. This may also occur because there are physical, psychic or contextual reasons for the child being more fragile or not having had the opportunity of being introduced to this important cultural universe. Books hold humanity's stories and are the support for narrative language. We chose to work with the transmission of literary narrative because we realized that reading to the other is a strategy that ensures the transmission and appropriation of stories and culture due to the permanence of writing. Writing raises the possibility of re-reading. Each new reading is a discovery that allows us to renew and reinforce the feeling of existing.

“Today books are for me a source for unleashing my imagination, for being able think about a lot of things that are impossible in reality. Before none of this existed for me, but now I take pleasure in reading”

A young volunteer reader, 1999

Reading mediation is the act of reading to children, young people or adults in a free and pleasurable manner. The mediator aims to share the pleasure of reading and discovering what books have to offer. They bring books closer to children, letting them make their own choices, reading the text and showing them illustrations, listening attentively, answering questions, observing and respecting responses. Reading a text is an infinite process, but the moment in which the mediator shares reading and the exchange of experiences with the child is unique in that it includes the bond thus established.

“I went to an incubator, with a mother and baby. The mother told me that the daughter was one week old and had a heart problem. I offered to read to the mother, and she accepted. I began to read; she was moved and began to cry. I was concerned and asked what had happened. She waved her hand to ask

me to pause. She needed to cry, to show her feelings. Then she told me the story of Lia, her baby. After telling me this, I asked if she wanted me to continue reading. She accepted again and I read some books, she laughed at some passages. In the end, I said that it would be good for her to tell stories, sing and talk to the daughter. When I went to see Lia in the incubator and started to talk to her, her heart began to beat faster. I told the mother that if she wanted books she could get them on the 2nd floor..." (Specialist with the Lively Library Hospitals program - Neonatal Unit, Pediatric Hospital)

Books should be made available for children, so that they can handle them and choose what they want to read. When children hear the story in a book and observe the illustrations, they show interest and preference for certain subjects, literary genres and types of books. During reading, they establish relationships between the story and the facts of their life and experience, thus exercising their ability to think, imagine, and connect ideas. At these times, they often reveal their knowledge, feelings and dreams. So children have different reactions to the same book, depending on their previous experience. The same applies to adults.

To read a story as the author wrote it, the book must be read without suppressing passages, or altering sentences or words to hide images or use them partially. Children are capable of understanding without changing or translating the more difficult words. Meeting and incorporating new words is a challenge and this is how they learn - through challenges and constantly discovering the unknown. If only what children already know is offered, how can they dream, learn and grow?

Narratives and quality books are attractive in themselves, as are the structure of language, musicality, words, rich illustrations, suspense, plots etc., so there is no need for a mediator to give a dramatized reading for the child to imagine a ferocious animal, for instance,



because they can each imagine “their own wolf” based on their own forms of representation. In this reading process, the child acquires familiarity with the written language in narrative form. A narrative is a manner of telling a story, myth, or legend in accordance with the author’s vision. And it does not need to be directly related to real life, but may serve as a marker for things that occurred or may occur in the future.

At these times, the mediator has the opportunity not only to get to know children better, but to discover things learn together with them, which is crucial to develop the work and overcome any difficulties.

“Several children are eager to tell the story. Even without knowing how to read, they look at the drawing and make up a story, sometimes on the same subject as the teacher - or they may totally change the course of the story while retaining the same characters.” (Educator - Cantinho do Girassol)

The work proposed here is centered on reading literature rather than story telling, which is a different situation. When telling a story, one uses memory and corporal expression. Storytellers are important figures in different cultures and traditions. Among the unlettered, they ensure continuity for the myths and history of their peoples. In oral civilizations, the material supports for the transmission of narratives correspond to precise criteria. The individuals to whom this practice is taught, and who are responsible for its transmission, will strictly obey these rules. Furthermore, in many cultures it is the telling of stories that signifies the world, habits, and people’s emotions. These are often collective experiences during which the group halts any other activity and meets to listen to the storyteller. So children and youths are accompanied by their peers but also by the other generations. And this is part of life and routine living for the group.

We have storytellers in our society too. Grandparents and parents that tell stories are common in the lives of many families. But contemporary life ways mean that we are losing the spontaneous gesture of exchanging experiences, whether professional or of life itself; people do not always have time to talk, tell anecdotes or tell stories heard from their ancestors.

Reading mediation helps a child gain access to the written language. Through stories, children enlarge their vocabulary and their universe, speak and interact with each other and adults. We found that through readings shared across generations and

groups we contribute to reciprocal learning, we facilitate integration, help bring people together and valorize individual experiences.

“... seeing how smaller children react, babies in their first contact with books attempt to tear images out of the books.. they soon see that the illustrations are not real. Even without having any idea of what they are, they become used to real life and constantly ask (if they can talk) what all those images are about. But older children, who already know how to talk, are in contact with illustrations and stories; the illustrations below the images are instigating - they are more like insects (one girl said), several have legs, but none have an eye or mouth... Gradually, the letters of the alphabet too become familiar.. Books are uniquely important.” (A young volunteer - São Paulo)

Reading is usually introduced into in the everyday life of children and youths at the beginning of school life. Emilia Ferreiro found that the sooner a child had contact with books, the easier they found learning to read and write. Children under 3, irrespective of their social origin, have the same learning potential. After that age, a huge gap opens up between children from favored and disadvantaged groups, due to differences in incentives and attention at home and in the institutions they attend¹⁴. Therefore, the sooner a child is introduced to narrative language, the less will be its losses in relation to the acquisition of competences required for its development.

The child that has access to the books from an early age treats them as friends and has an affectionate relationship with them, as if they were pacifiers, cloth napkins or toys; they are seen as objects that signify security, support and stability. Conversely, children that have no contact with books until schooling begins will tend to incorporate them as school material with content to be learned and obligatory exercises testing their competences. Through literature, the child travels, discovers different places, different people, and different situations - and feeds its imagination. The reader is not a totally passive person with no history, ready to absorb anything. On the contrary, although a child, it has its life experience, its own knowledge, with which it will establish a relationship of interchange with the book, the world and the people around it. In this interchange, the reader is an active individual that adds its

¹⁴ See article by René Diatkine, Desarrollo psíquico y transmisión cultural [Psychic development and cultural transmission] in Espacios para la lectura, Year 2, No. 5, 2000.

knowledge to that of the author and is thus enriched by this dialogue, which the reader feeds back into its interpretation of the world. It is in the interchange of repertoires, in the exchange of these readings that children discover that there is not one single way of seeing and understanding the world. To educate a critical thinking citizen means giving the child a chance to contrast different points of view and discover new perspectives.

Reading a book aloud prompts the child to enter the culture of writing. Through reading and repeating a story, the child discovers not only the specificity of the written language, but particularly its function. On listening to the same story several times (children love stories they already know), they discover permanence through the repetition of the same words. This will give a child cultural and linguistic references it can use.¹⁵



The child asks for the same story to be repeated because it has experienced feelings (such as sadness, happiness, fear) on listening to it. Repetition prompts him to play with these situations in the imaginary, because it is protected by the context of the book and the company of the mediator. There is comfort in knowing the outline of the narrative (the child already knows how it will develop and end).

“The work was done in one individual session with a 3 year-old child with severe bilateral hearing impairment. The book chosen was Tamanho real, livro dos contrários (Lifesize, book of opposites). With its large colored illustrations and very little text, the book gained the attention of the child, who immediately came closer and wanted to take it,

¹⁵ In this respect see Élie Bajard. Caminhos da escrita: espaços de aprendizagem [Paths of writing - places of learning]. São Paulo: Cortez, 2002.

imitate the story and go over it several times, and was not interested in other books in the activity. We spent at least 20 minutes of the session handling the book and going over the story.” (Educator - CPPL - Recife - PE)

One of the important aspects of literature is to ensure cultural transmission through the generations and keep the cultural memory of peoples alive. The literary critic Antonio Cândido wrote: “just as psychic equilibrium is not possible without dreaming during sleep, perhaps we may say that there is no social equilibrium without literature. [...] Literature clearly emerges as the universal manifestation of all men in all periods. No people, no individual, can live without the chance to have contact with some kind of fabulation. [...] Now, if nobody can live for 24 hours without plunging into the universe of fiction and poetry, of literature in the broad sense I have referred to, it seems to me that literature must correspond to a universal need that has to be met, and having this need met constitutes a right.”¹⁶

Relations between adults and children and teenagers have been submitted to great changes. These are based on the conflicts necessarily experienced in dealing with the demands of pleasure and autonomy and the demands of real life. The equilibrium of the child and the teenager is constituted on the basis of these different experiences. The universe of books, stories, and literature, has much to say of this, for which reason it is recognized, and pleases everybody and through this universality enriches the work of reading mediation and brings individuals together.

Of course the different conflict situations that a child or young person experiences in their cultural references, living conditions and well-being have an important weight for their future - but transformations are always possible. Random situations may have a decisive weight in the destiny of each individual or group and may do so in an unpredictable manner. So we believe that a crucial ingredient of comprised of the relations between the subject and that which written language and literature transmit so that individuals may be part of culture and be located in the history of humanity.¹⁷

¹⁶ CANDIDO, A. Vários Escritos [Misc. Writings]. São Paulo: Ed.Duas Cidades, 1995.

¹⁷ See Márcia Wada and Patrícia B. Pereira Leite. Narrativas Literárias, comunicação compartilhada criando a possibilidade de um espaço de expressão [Literary narratives, shared communication creating the possibility of a space for self-expression]. III Encontro Psicanalítico da Teoria dos Campos [3rd Field Theory - Psychoanalysis Conference].

3.1 • Developmental Aspects of Language

Oral language is usually constituted between the 10th and 30th months of a child's life. Starting from the first words such as “mom” or “dad”, they elaborate the first rudiments of language and thought. At this stage two types of language surround a baby: factual language and narrative language. Factual language accompanies the facts and gestures of everyday life, meaning the concrete situations experienced by children. Sentences are often incomplete and continuous. Sometimes they are simply remarks that have no beginning or ending and must be contextualized if they are to be understood.

Narrative language arouses interest and is perceived by children from a very early age. This type of language does not accompany events but narrates them at a distance. It has a beginning, middle and end that may be altered to transform what is being narrated. The baby is quick to perceive the difference between these two forms of language and starts to play with them. It is existence between factual language and narrative language that will help the child in the acquisition of its own language, the development of thought and the constitution of its internal psychic space for the imaginary.¹⁸ The constitution of this internal space is crucial to the child's development. It needs it to play, dream and abstract. By playing with situations and people that surround it, alone or in its thoughts, the child acquires greater freedom and ability to learn and deal with its internal conflicts.

Before learning written language, the child will know how to represent or draw a figure and be able to invent a story based on this drawing. It will differentiate near and far, or home and world. By drawing, a child is creating a narrative in which it expresses feelings and emotions in relation to its environment. When it draws a home, family and a few flowers, the child narrates something that combines its real life with fiction. It is capable, finally, of imagining, using memory and projecting itself into the future. When the play between factual and narrative languages is used naturally with a baby in a family, this plays a unique and essential role in the development of language and affectivity. But many babies and small children are deprived of this narrative language. Therefore putting the child in contact with the narrative form of

¹⁸ See Marie Bonnafé. Le récit, un enjeu capital, in *Actions Culturelles Contre les Exclusions et les Ségregations*.

language is crucial during the period of acquisition of language.

“It was a wonderful experience... she was a very young child with a short attention span but we succeeded in having an activity that really interested her. In the following sessions, she always came in asking for the book, not using words, because she still does not have that kind of vocabulary, but imitating the animals in the story, so we read it several times. It was surprising and extremely helpful for the child’s vocal stimulation, which is in the phase of preparing the first phonemes for the development of oral language.” (- CPPL - Recife - PE)

When they are listening to a book being read to them, children are learning more about their own language and making contact with written and narrative language. They are discovering the author’s vision of the world and may compare it with their own vision. In particular, they are getting to know the universe of the reader and the cultural heritage that belongs to them



4 • Reading mediation

“As the day began, I was already eager for the reading mediation scheduled for today. I arranged with my partner to meet in the library to choose some books, get the mattress and cushions and go on to the clinic. As I was a little late, my partner had already separated a good part of the collection to take with us by the time I arrived. Luckily, her favorite books do not coincide with mine, so I was able to get almost all the books I like and we took a very big and varied collection (about 40 books).

The clinic was super packed! Children, mothers and parents were sitting watching television and others waited to be called as they leaned against the wall or waited in the corridor. We were looking at the children more closely - and they seemed to notice something different too (perhaps because of the basket of books and our uniforms; we were wearing the project T-shirt and badge).

We sat down in the corner and set up the space on the floor while we looked around and said “yes, come on over and sit down... do you want to read a story? “Soon a group of 3 siblings left the mother and came over to me. I looked at my partner and made a sign “I will start with these.” Meanwhile, she finished placing the books on the rug and left in search of new readers.

“I want this one, “ said Bernardo, the oldest (11) as soon as I began to show them the books. We then started on “The Real Story of the Three Pigs” - which was constantly interrupted by different requests. “Will you read this one too after? “ asked 6-year-old Leo. “Yes, I will”, I answered. “And this too, also? “, “Yes”, I repeated. “And that one? “ I then suggested he chose what he would like to hear and made a pile in his lap, since when the story ended I would read another that he chose. He listened a little more to the story of the good wolf but soon went crawling over the rug of books to find what interested him most. While I continued to read to Bernardo (super attentive to the unfolding story) and Marina (middle sister, aged 8, very quiet) I noticed that Leo had rejected two books that had no text. Later, I was able to understand why he did that: “Those have no story!”

I suggested we read “Filipe, contra o tempo e o vento” and as soon as I silently turned the first pages showing them the pictures and watching their

faces, there was an avalanche of questions, answers, suggestions and lively versions for the mouse's adventure (no words). The book was placed on the floor and the group (now 8 strong) was gathered around it discovering every detail of the story.

I looked around and I saw that my partner was still on the other corner of the rug, still quite busy with one single child - who apparently had asked for all the stories of "Lá Vem História". (History Coming Up).

Time passed and while we were starting to "pack" the library, I felt a tug on my arm "Can I take that story to read to my mother?" It was Leo, holding "Filipe" (Report from the team at the Biblioteca Viva em Hospitais Program, Fadc,-S.P)

Reading mediation is a situation in which two or more people establish a relationship by reading stories. The person that reads the books is there to accompany the other in listening to the story, and hearing any suggestions that may emerge without a concern for intervening. By respecting each individual's manner, measure and pace of listening and expressing themselves, they are providing an affective and pleasurable involvement with stories and books.

In general the aim is a relaxed and free mood in which children can hear or read books, talk and comment as they wish and have no obligation to submit any work or product of the reading. Reading mediation is always done in the same way for any audience. What varies from one situation to another is the context: different types of institution (day cares, hospitals, schools etc), public or private spaces. So before starting the activity, mediators plan the actions they aim to develop in accordance with the characteristics of the institution and the group to be assisted.

"Every Friday, we see seniors of families assisted by Pólo Capitão Maurício/Lar Fabiano de Cristo, with which we maintain a partnership and we thought of enriching these meetings by taking along the Lively Library program. [...] I worked in the same way as with children. As we were already in a circle, I spread the books on the floor and asked them to choose one. But nobody moved, they were all looking at me; for the first time, I was honestly at a loss! Then grandmother Luiza chose Rápido como um gafanhoto (As fast

as a grasshopper). They all loved the drawings and laughed all the time. Tanto, tanto (So much, so much) drew their attention due to the colored characters they said they were very beautiful and that there was a lot of prejudice against black people. Reading Bruxa, Bruxa (Witch, Witch) the room was filled with laughter as they pulled faces, whispered amongst themselves and even hid their faces. Grandma Miriam José thought there were already a lot of people in the party, but in the end they all liked it. In A cama da mamãe (Mom's bed) there was much more identification because they immediately made comparisons with their own everyday lives, and the children and grandchildren that used mom's bed as shelter. (Educators - Centro Social Ana Rosa - Recife - PE).

It is important to read the story exactly as it is written rather than in the mediator's own words. We want to transmit text in narrative form and by reading exactly what is written, the permanence of the story is ensured. Writing raises the possibility of re-

reading. Children like to listen to the same story several times and it gives them security and comfort, as it transmits the sensation of familiarity. So whenever possible, it is important to read books as many times as they request, as long as repetition is accepted by other children and that we are not bored by doing so. Remember that children like to hear the same story exactly the way it was read to them before.

The child or teenager needs to identify with the book, and with the library space. It is always advisable to ask what children want to read or hear. In general, the answers vary, but the mediator will find a way of meeting children's and young people's wishes.



“In the beginning it was a little difficult, they did not like it very much, but over time, with daily contact, with themselves choosing the books, their interest was aroused and they cared for the story books. Now, they like to repeat the stories, and for me it is gratifying to see acceptance of books. Even after so much time, there are children who try to remember the story, but they are eventually fascinated by the images and even the writing in books.” (Educator - ASSA - Ass. Social Santo Antonio - SP)

Sometimes there is an expectation of reading to the whole group, but it does not always work out. You often read for just a few children or even a single child. But all these situations are valid and important. Children are not all the same and do not behave in the same way everyday. However, even when just one child is listening to the reading, one sees that the others, although concentrating on a game, are also paying attention to the story being read.

“It is different telling stories with some children talking at the same time, but it is interesting too because no matter how much some of them talk, they do understand and listen to what we are reading.” (Teacher - EMEI (Municipal School of Elementary Education) Soneca - Santo Antônio da Patrulha)

“[...] initially we read but they felt distant from stories and books. But we began to notice some children repeating words from the stories when we were reading, a clear sign that they were paying attention, if not to the text as a whole, at least to fragments associated with a context probably matching some situation in their everyday lives. “ - Centro de Pesquisa em Psicanálise e Linguagem [Center for Psychoanalysis and Language Research]- Recife - PE).

Mediation situations vary, even when there is a fixed group of children. Some days they are less interested in reading, which is normal, even adults readers don't read everyday. Therefore, it is important for the mediator to be unruffled and foresee this possibility. Thus while not losing sight of the aim of reading books, they may propose games or other activities to allow the children to express themselves and that may be alternated with reading periods when they are restless or tired, or in other situations as necessary.

“I noted that when we finished the story, they took the book and started to tell it to friends in their own way. This happens more often among the 4 year-olds, but the 3-year-olds are already beginning this process.” (Rosângela de F. Panoni - Casa da Criança Souzas - Campinas - SP)

Reading mediation may also take place in heterogeneous groups, in relation to age, origin, social class and sex, facilitating more inclusion. In these groups, the older children can hear stories from books read for younger ones that they would like to read without feeling embarrassed over it. And younger children like to imitate older ones or adults in the choice of books and behavior. It is a very favorable situation, and it is interesting to prioritize these moments and leverage particularly situations where we can have the parents present.

“I went to UCINE where Bruninho (2 months) was wide awake, I read him several stories and he paid attention to my voice, and sometimes stared at something in the book, I read Opostos Divertidos, Joaninha Rabugenta and Procure e Ache, (Amusing Opposites, Grumpy Ladybug and Seek and Find). Then I read Gilgamesh to his mother and another mother in the same room.

On leaving this room a mother in the next room requested reading for her son and said Last week Caio (3 months) was sleeping, but not today, I want him to listen to stories! The mother was fascinated by the stories; I read Opostos Divertidos, O Explorador Experto and Brincadeiras Cintilantes (Amusing Opposites, Expert Explorer and Sparkling Games). She was happy that the baby was getting attention. He was sleepy and did not seem to be understanding what was happening, but the mother was radiant!” (Nutritionist - Instituto da Criança- S.P)

Also, when babies are present, for instance, they find it difficult to settle down to listen to a story for a long time. For them listening to a story depends on the presence of adults, other children and being the center of attention. In babies, attention is intensive but fleeting and it is rare for them to listen continuously and silently, or asking questions, as the older ones do.

“Read, read and read, that is great, [in Ibirapuera Park]. - Wow, was I missing that! Reading for adults is different; the first time I thought my hands

would not stop trembling. But then I read two or three books and everybody was impressed, even myself!

When the children began to choose books and didn't want to leave, I was able to perceive the scale of the work we are starting. Sometimes, parents were astonished on seeing children so interested and even children who had not been communicative were smiling, talking or having fun.” (Young mediator - Instituição Filomena - São Paulo - SP).

In institutions, there can be reading for groups of the staff too, with the aim of publicizing the project and motivating them to participate.

“I went to the second floor waiting room for tests and blood samples. I talked to four staff members, explained the project and asked if they would like to listen to stories. They were interested. I stretched out the sheet on the floor, spread the books around and began reading: OH!, Tanto, tanto, A pequena toupeira, Escondida, Ninoca, Adivinha quanto (Oh!, So much, so much, The little mole, Hidden, Ninoca, Guess how many ...)... After 20 minutes, there was a miracle of multiplication. It was the day before Easter. More staff emerged from the corridors and suddenly there were more than 15 people listening to the stories nurses, cleaners, physiotherapists, nutritionists... It was fantastic!” (Instituto da Criança - São Paulo - SP)

You can read to children anywhere - at home, at church, in school, in the community and even on public transportation.

When I got to the Amparo community, I noticed that some children were quiet and others very restless. Then we sat down in front of one of the children and showed them the books on the floor. As soon as I placed them on the floor, Kaline, a 5 year-old girl, took a book and began to read the story she saw in the images. Soon they were all were involved with the books and I had not even read anything. Then, Vanessa, aged 8, looked at me and said “Would you read for me? “, and I read the whole book quite slowly. .. I could see in their eyes that they were taking a visual reading of the story. (Educator, Grupo Sobe e Desce, Olinda, PE).

4.1-Planning for mediation

Every mediator has to plan each day's activities, just as a teacher plans each day in the classroom, or people program their working day. Planning for reading mediation involves having a program for the action to be developed in advance and arranging the means to carry it out, such as books, cushions, rugs, pencil, paper, material to repair torn books etc. Moreover there is a need for mediators to be familiar with the context in which they will act and the audience.

If a mediator does not belong to the staff of the institution, he will have a set schedule for reading on certain weekdays. The planning process has to take into account the characteristics of the group and the time available as well as time for interchanging experiences with the group's educators or teachers. If the mediator is also a teacher for a group of children in a school, he or she can plan the activity as part of classroom routine by reading a text, say, before mathematics class, if there is no need to have a set schedule for reading. The activity may also be arranged for different locations away from the classroom, for children of different ages, staff and parents.

Readers often face situations in which children want the same books and may damage them as they quarrel with each other.

“ Daniel was a 7 year-old who read O Galileu leu. His own family name was Galileu too. He was so proud of his name because Galileu was a researcher. One day he told me he was going to read this book. I said “Ok, take it”, and he added “He has the same name as me, right?” He took the book and read it and told the story to the other children sitting there. There was a quarrel because everybody wanted to read it. It is always like this, when one of them tells a story they all want to read the book. About 20 pile up on top of it and they may even tear the book.” (Educator - Pró-menor Barão Geraldo - Campinas - SP)

When they realize that the books will always be there, the children will gradually learn how to negotiate and wait their turn. On the other hand, one has to have some sensibility in certain situations when it really is important to let a certain child keep a book all day.

Reading is performed in a very casual and unrestricted manner so the children are very close to the mediator. In these situations, there has to be some discipline to show

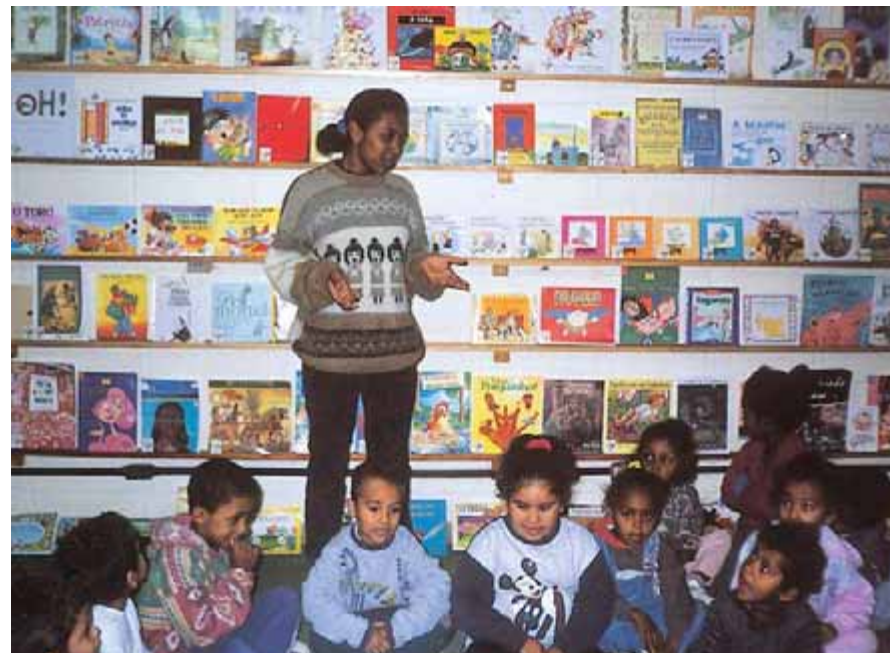
them that if they are to spend time together pleasantly and fruitfully, they have to respect the opinion of others, wait their turn to speak etc. This should be done in a friendly manner to avoid intimidating the child from asking questions and giving explanations or opinions.

Each individual has to be aware of what they will tolerate and set rules for the group. And children will feel more secure in relation to what they can or cannot do, if the mediator is consistent and firm in applying these rules. Unexpected situations may hinder or impede reading, - new children joining the group, other activities that attract attention, an exceptional event involving somebody in the group or people close to them.

4.2-Physical space for mediation: Unavoidable Mess

“When we work collectively with about four mediators, we lay rugs, spread out books. I am always struck by the effect this has, the number of people brought together, their reactions and their happiness, and the happiness it brings to their parents. This affects the dynamics, because these parents spend days or weeks here in the hospital with the children. And suddenly, we create a moment of happiness, discovery, interchange, and pleasure. My eyes well up with tears every time we organize a collective reading...” (Hospital Pequeno Príncipe - Curitiba - PR)

Whenever the mediator lays a rug or sheet and places books and cushions on the floor, children start to understand the meaning of this situation, because the environment is much cozier, and they associate reading time with a pleasant and informal situation. The reading is held in a certain physical space, especially organized and prepared to become a pleasant place where children feel comfortable and at ease to handle the



books, move around, come closer to the mediator, read and listen to reading, speak, sing, in short to express themselves in whatever way they like. There is no such thing as a standard physical space for a reading.

Some institutions provide a fixed location for reading mediation: a room with a rug, cushions and shelves so the books can be shown and the children can see their covers. Where there is no fixed place for mediation activity, they may use the same space as other activities, such as the play room, the dining hall, a sports hall, a normal activity room or any other room as long as the mediator arranges the space to make it nice and comfortable for children.

Educators may take the books for use in their classroom or with their group. Books may also be distributed in cases and a few allocated to each room, to be exchanged among groups at certain times. This is how a mobile library works in an institution. So each group can have access to different books to be read everyday through the time spent in the institution.

The space where reading mediation takes place does not usually affect the results. Children usually respond well to books regardless of noises or improvised surroundings. But on the first day in an improvised location children will often want to explore the space. Organizing a cozy reading corner and starting to read, even if it is for only one child, may be a way of drawing the attention of the others and reducing dispersion.

Reading time should not be compulsory either. Adults know what they want to read, so they can be selective or skip readings not to their liking. Why not let children do the same? If we want books to become part of everyday life, we should ideally avoid them being an imposition, or a means of evaluating children. If a child feels free and has autonomy to use a book without having to ask an adult for help, there is a much better chance of it getting the most out of the book. But autonomy does not mean simply letting everybody take what they want and then leave it anywhere. Autonomy is an achievement that the child reaches day by day, as it learns how the library is organized, how the books it likes most are stored, what types of books there are, how it can use them and then store them again. This autonomy is crucial for children to realize that they themselves can seek and acquire knowledge and obtain answers to their questions, doubts and needs in a wide range of places. Ensuring easy access to books - letting children take books and feel they can read them whenever they want to - is a necessary but not

sufficient condition for the work, since access is not only taking a book, but also and particularly understanding it and making good use of it.

Children are not isolated beings; they live with a family, have friends and relate to people that do not have a chance to take part in reading mediations or libraries. So books must enter their lives not as strange objects, but in an integral manner. To prevent books becoming a factor causing isolation or differentiation, there may be loan arrangements so that children - and even their parents, siblings, cousins etc. - can take books home with them. This is a way of reaching out to the environments where children live, so that families get involved and have contact with what they are reading, thus expanding the number of readers.

“Today we did a mediation for the children in F and H infirmaries. These infirmaries have an indefinite isolation period [...], so we did the mediation bed by bed. There are eight children in infirmary F, seven of them under 2 and one aged 6. When we went into the infirmary, Naiara, aged 20 months, soon drew my attention. Most of the children were sleeping, with their parents or mothers, but she was awake and had no companion. When I went over to her with the books, she stood up in the cradle and followed my movements. I spread some books on her cradle, beside her. She sat down and looked at them but didn’t pick them up. I chose Jonathan Langley’s Goldilocks and began to read it to her. I was surprised by the interest she has shown in books and reading. I read another five books to her. The fold-out books made her smile in wonder. What I found strange was that Naiara never touched the books.” (Nurses - IPPMG/ UFRJ - RJ)

In public or open spaces, such as parks, gardens and squares,



mediators choose a place under a tree, under a marquee, or on the lawn, lay a rug and place books and cushions on it to prepare the space for the activity. The simple fact of arranging the place will attract attention and people's curiosity.

Although a mediator may plan an activity and expect to read a certain number of books, this does not always happen as planned, since children's behavior varies from one day to the next or due to external interventions. When a mediator has been doing the activity for some time, he or she may evaluate their previous performance before planning the next and recall which books the children enjoy most. This knowledge is used to guide choice and the number of books needed, the duration and location for the mediation.

In other institutions, the place where children await treatment may be used as the mediation place. In hospitals for instance, the activity may be held in the lobby, in waiting rooms, in corridors, or even in the rooms where children sleep or are submitted to tests. Readings will be held for a different group of children each day and may take place with the involvement of parents, friends or hospital staff. In this case the mediator already knows he or she will be reading to children who are there for a consultation, treatment or internment. These children are experiencing fragility and a need for affection. They may be feeling insecure and usually they do not spend much time in hospital.

We were at the end of the corridor, near X-rays and EEGs. It is a more or less a place of passage, so the audience fluctuated quite a lot. Children were coming and going all the time. Older children picked books and read them alone as they laughed out loud. Debora, aged 8 -9, began to read alone. Then she turned to me and said she was tired because she read very slowly. I asked her if she wanted me to read to her and she loved it. She paid attention, asked many questions and made comments. When her mother called her, Debora chose a book and told me that she wanted to listen to it next time.

A father was looking on from a distance and his 3 year-old wanted to join the group. He came closer, sat down and began to read, first by himself own and then to his son. Mothers coming to make appointments for X-rays heard the children ask to stay and left them with us to listen to stories. On the way

back, they paused for a little while to listen themselves.” (Woman doctor - Hospital Municipal Jesus -RJ)

4.3 • Which books to select?

Criteria for selecting books from the collection vary. The first and broadest criterion is to seek diversity, both in enlarging visual and verbal language and in terms of themes, subjects and genres. Secondly, classics from Brazilian and international literature should be used, including myths, fairy tales, popular and folklore stories, fables and legends. This collection attempts to show how men think, feel and relate to society and nature at different times, in different places and cultures. Finally, it seeks to show the reader different views of the world and new voices. Among the Brazilian authors and works, one might mention Monteiro Lobato and *Contos Tradicionais do Brasil*, (Traditional Stories of Brazil) by Luís da Câmara Cascudo; From Latin America, myths, legends and popular stories; From Europe, *Myths of the Knights*, *Italian Fables* by Ítalo Calvino, Scandinavian tales, *La Fontaine*, Perrault and the Brothers Grimm.

Another criterion to be taken into account is the relationship between narrator and reader in literary works. The books selected establish a dialogue with the reader, complicity with the child and its reading of the world. The person writing is expressing herself and transmitting the fruit of sophisticated and laborious work. Those who read it will know whether the text pleases them, touches their feelings, teaches them something or fascinates them. Visual books of images should also be part of the collection, because reading images comes before reading words. By reading images we facilitate the development required to understand more



sophisticated symbols - namely letters. It also brings contact with different forms of expression and thought and different interpretations made by the children. The same image may have innumerable meanings. It may relate to varied sensations and emotions or to readers' previous experiences. "The image book, by allowing the invention of different texts based on the same visual narrative, stimulates difference and respect for difference, without which there can be no democracy."¹⁹

Poetry is also important, because children relate to the world through play, language and growth. Poetry is charged with playfulness, games, rhythms and sonority that children recognize and identify with. Reading or listening to poetry is not always the usual practice, but children sing, play guessing games, and make up verses and rhymes in their games. In addition to well-known authors, the collection attempts to include contemporary poetic works for children.

The selection of books from contemporary literature for children and young people should also cover science fiction, detective stories and suspense, horror and mystery, love stories and stories from everyday life. Books of this nature show a reader different visions and the possibility of reflecting, since they take up subjects germane to the imaginary or subjects such as love, death, separation, growth, violence, sexuality, the discovery of different customs and life ways in other countries, achievements, discrimination, minorities, drugs, friendships etc.

Note that the National Foundation for Children and Young People's Books (local acronym FNLIJ) holds an annual selection of quality works published in the previous year, grouped by category, which is used as a basis and guideline for institutions setting up their own collections, as do other organizations working with literature.

4.3.1 • Selecting books for mediation

Full knowledge of the collection is best for mediators so that they can make reading a more meaningful activity, since they select the books and prepared to listen to children's responses. The more information they have on the collection, the more they can get out of a reading. Moreover, it is through this knowledge

¹⁹ CAMARGO, L. Ilustração do livro infantil [Illustration for children's books]. Belo Horizonte: Ed. Lê, 1995.

that the mediator can help conserve the collection and indicate titles to be replenished.

Selection from the collection will be guided by the mediator's knowledge of the group of children. Mediators gradually perceive the type of reading that they like most and find most attention-grabbing, and also what may be introduced as an innovation.

"I see that the younger children always love to take part in the stories. When I want to exchange the books they already know and get new ones, their involvement is not total. For this reason, the exchanging of books between one mediation and the next is done gradually." (Educator - C.S. Ana Rosa - Recife - PE).

As well as variety of titles, having a sufficient number of copies is another important aspect for a mediation, to ensure that the children have more choice and can have book just for themselves alone at certain times.

When there is a heterogeneous audience, the mediator has to select a variety of books that will interest the group. Many adults enjoy children's books with illustrations, and children may appreciate books with more complex stories and even without illustrations.

"The children didn't want us to read, they only wanted to look at the drawings. The interesting thing was that the parents ended up listening and telling stories. Many children only wanted to browse the pages of the books, while others listened to the story and laughed. I loved the contact with a lot of children and adults." (Young mediator - Instituição ?? Parelheiros - São Paulo - SP)



Finally, the library must be added to from time to time. The more children become interested in reading books, the more demand there will be for other publications. Books will age and deteriorate so each institution has to develop its own strategies for building a full collection of literature, plus reference works such as dictionaries, magazines, newspapers, encyclopedias, almanacs etc.

5 • Multiplying the project

As we have shown above, the processes of educating readers are always open to expansion. Reading can be taken to the community and its surroundings, such as other families, workplaces, adult literacy courses and churches.

“Today we spent a beautiful Sunday morning in the park (Redenção), with rugs and cushions, surrounded by nature. Some children were in the square, others were walking around and stole a glance at us they passed by and then gradually came closer, sat down and picked up books to look at. Then I asked: “- What if I read the story to you?” and then I started to read. A two year old called Vitória wanted to stay in my lap. Another called Paola spent a long time asking me the characters’ names. Then, to my surprise, she decided to create her own story with engravings from another book and told us about them. I perceived that their imagination was moved by the stories and for me this was a very good and unforgettable experience. I think stories and nature combine well. “ (Educator from Creche Vovó Ida, - describing “Story time in Redenção”, where she worked with children from several age groups.)

If each institution becomes a training center, as many of them already have, the project will not be restricted to the organization, but will have ensured its permanence as a reading project that really transforms specific actions into political actions, mobilizes society for reading, transforms children’s and young people’s lives and - more importantly - helps lower the barriers to social inclusion for this population.

Multiplication first takes place in the center itself, with the educators. Later, Jorge and I were invited by the Social Center to organize multiplication for 35 educators who had not taken part in the project, and it was quite straightforward. All of them are already working with books and they are interested in acquiring some of the collection from the Biblioteca Viva Program. All of the Bom Parto centers are now (in 2000) participating in meetings to train reading mediators. (Educator - "Miralda Santos Lima" Youth Center - São Paulo - SP)

Regardless of the context where the activity of reading mediation is performed, the result is a transformation in the people involved educators, staff at institutions, mediators, children, young people and their families.

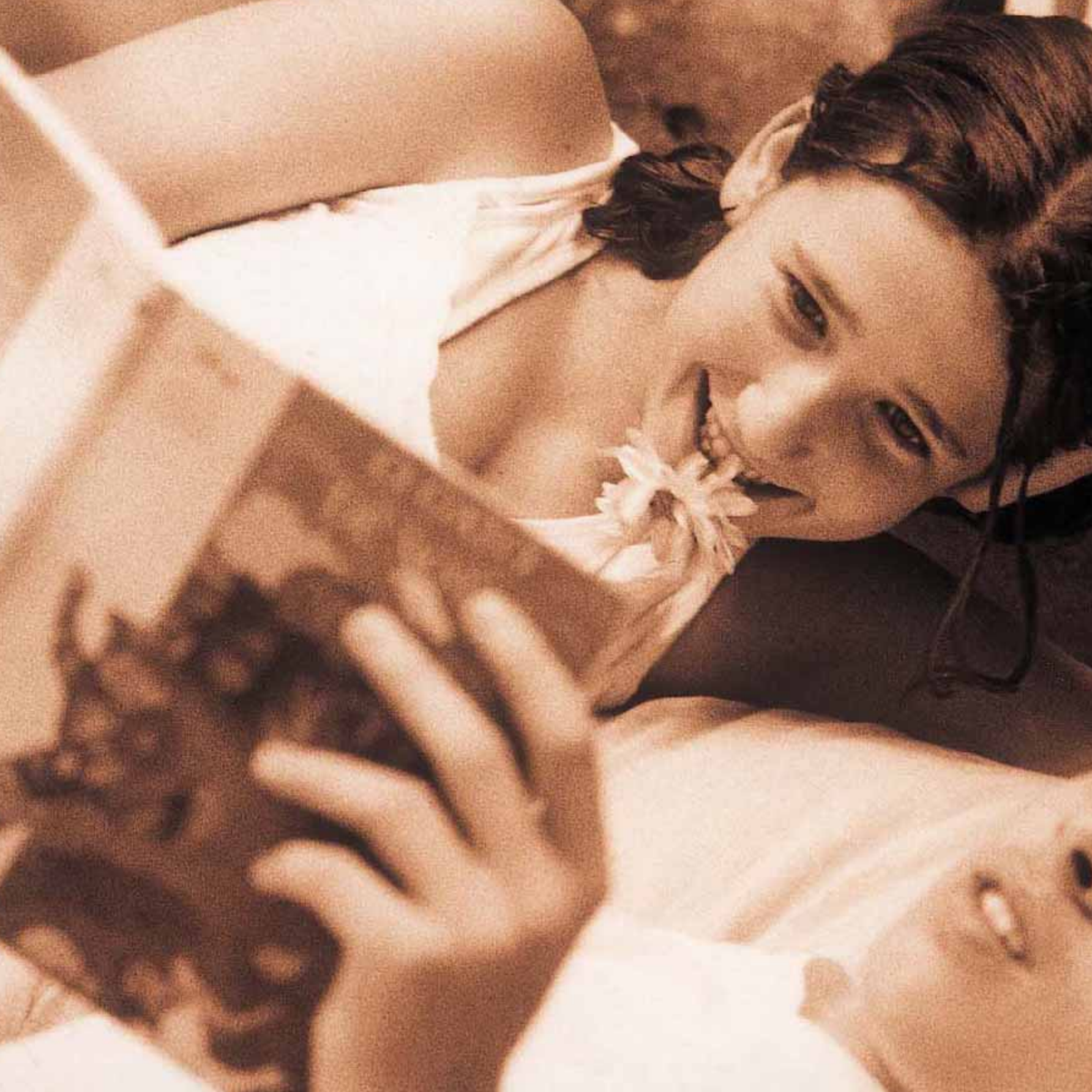
"As soon as the books arrived, we held a one-day training session with the educators from the institute. I saw that response and receptivity were very good, really very good, and I was even surprised. To develop the project better, I formed a team with more two educators from craft, Meire and Liliam (...) and we are constantly meeting and exchanging ideas and experiences. They are so committed to the work... I don't know who is more impressed by the books, the children or the educators." (Educator - Instituto Salesiano - Curitiba - PR)

Through reading mediation and contact with literature, people organize their thoughts better and express ideas more often and more clearly. They start to talk about themselves and think on a larger scale. They see a chance of transforming their everyday lives and raising their sights in life. There is a qualitative change in people, both from the personal point of view and in relationships with others.



“The teenagers make friends with books, they are comfortable, they relax, they show preferences and ask the reading mediator to tell them stories. The interesting thing here is that free access to the Biblioteca Viva Program means people can always look for a book. Every day there are teenagers browsing the books and maintaining through this gesture their enthusiasm for reading and individual contact with books.” (...) Teenagers may do their reading individually. They can take books out to clubs, to the woods or to camps, or they can read in their rooms at night.” (Janesley Florksac - Lar Cantinho do Girasol - Shelter for pre-teenage and teenage victims of sexual abuse - Brasília - DF)







Part III

How to implement
the project
in an institution

How to implement the project in an institution

1 • Stages of implementation

Planning is preparing the future on the basis of existing knowledge and existent conditions. Planning is a method for analyzing in advance, defining actions that we seek to develop in a certain period of time to reach a certain purpose. This purpose is materialized through achieving various objectives.

The Biblioteca Viva Program, like every project due to be implemented, required planning, identification of those involved with the proposed objectives and alterations in the routine of the institution or community to include a new action in the everyday lives of the children.

In relation to implementation, the recommendation is firstly to constitute a coordinating team in charge of planning all actions. The coordination team may be just one person or a small group of staff from the institution. It will be responsible for planning and executing the implementation process, follow-up, and supervision. It will also have the function of mobilizing and motivating people, encouraging interest and commitment in the search for solutions needed to run the project in the institution.

We would suggest certain pre-conditions to be met by the people making up the coordination team.

- be aware of the aims of the Biblioteca Viva Program and want to take part in it;
- have time to spend on implementing the project;
- have leadership and articulation abilities, ease of communication and good at working in a group;
- have a connection with the community in which the institution is located.
- have support from their boss or management

Let us list the stages required to implement the project

- Decide the target audience for training
- Publicize the project in its initial phase to inform other interested participants: staff of the institution, other institutions and the community.
- When necessary, contact other institutions so that mediators can have hands-on experience during training.
- Enroll candidates for mediator positions.
- Select mediators on the basis of the predetermined requirements.
- Draw up a profile of the selected mediators based on data from enrollment forms as a guide to planning activities for the reading mediators training course.
- Select the book collection to be used for training and to compose the institution's library.
- Plan the training course and provide the necessary infrastructure, basic content and methodological strategies to be used on the basis of the profiles of the selected mediators.
- Organize training groups in line with the number and characteristics of the participants.
- Forecast total workload per day and per activity.
- Organize mediators and the routine for starting the work with the children.
- Organize monitoring through systematic meetings.
- Evaluation.

Each stage requires strategies or pathways indicating the best way to materialize them. Therefore, an essential step is to draw up an implementation schedule breaking down these activities over time in order to visualize the course of the work and the execution of each stage in the process.

Unforeseen developments are normally part of this implementation process. However, when there is planning, any deviation from the proper course can be more easily identified thus facilitating adjustments to the course in order to achieve the predetermined aims. Without planning, the implementation of a project is subject to improvisations and possibly not materialized in an appropriate manner. This schedule has to cover all stages of the implementation of the project as mentioned above in the period preceding the date set for starting the project in the institution. The schedule

shows the periods for completion of each of the stages preceding the date set for beginning the project. An important point is that the coordination group must meet systematically to evaluate what has been achieved, adjust the course of the work, plan the next stages and review the schedule if necessary.

2 • Publicizing the program

Publicity for the project explains its purposes and the benefits that it can provide, in other words it spreads the word. This is needed internally, to obtain the support of staff and users of the institution, and externally, seeking to enlarge the activity and win commitment from other institutions and the community.

Publicity will be necessary at several points in the development of the work, because it keeps the people involved informed and makes the actions of the institution transparent. What is needed is to publicize

- the project in the community, in the teaching network and other entities;
- the campaign for adherence of new institutions and search for sponsors;
- the results of the actions in relation to children and young people;
- any sponsorship and partnerships obtained;
- other institutions adhering to the project.

If publicity is to obtain good results it must use strategies appropriate for its target audience in order to avoid wasting material and time. By asking what we seek to publicize and to whom we wish to publicize it, we decide the types of resources to be used explanatory posters and pamphlets, lectures and workshops, videos, community radios, neighborhood newspapers etc.



With the aim of motivating staff and parents of children at an institution, a good publicity strategy is to hold reading workshops and / or present a video on the project. Workshops enable the educator to demonstrate reading mediation to parents and staff working in the same way as for children: letting them take books, browse and choose from the collection, reading to them or letting them read alone, reading to a few or to just one child, letting them freely show their feelings in relation to the stories being read. Another strategy for publicizing the project is to point to the contribution of reading mediation emphasizing the aspect most closely identified with the nature of the target institution.

During the publicity campaign, the coordinators can get in touch with other institutions to broaden the campaign. Adherence of more institutions will form a network of mutual support with possible interchange of services among them, such as providing spaces, joint mediator training courses, monitoring and supervision of activities, partnership in the acquisition of materials for the activity and seeking sponsors for the project.

The purpose of building this network of mutual support, constituted of several types of institutions, public or private, such as schools, libraries, institutions providing direct assistance for children and young people etc., is to strengthen the implementation and expansion of the project in the community.

“My institution began to participate in the Biblioteca Viva Program together with Romília Maria. Initially, the books used came in cases from Romília and were changed every two months. In 1998, the fraternity campaign was on the theme of “Education for everybody”, so the community met and donated money to buy new books; and early in 1999, the campaign was “Reading in the vacations”, so we got a donation of several books through FEAC.” (L - Associação A.S. São João Vianney - Campinas - SP).

“The new library will in the future be open for other organizations to borrow books. One of them, Nalca, has already been here at our organization to visit the library and their children will soon be able to share these wonderful books from the Biblioteca Viva Program with us. “ (Monitor - Casa da Criança Sousas - Campinas - SP)

At several points in the development of the project there will have to be contacts made with community radios and newspapers, neighborhood newspapers, NGOs, and religious and other institutions, with the aim of obtaining sponsorship and cooperation for publicity, inauguration, providing spaces, and buying the books and materials required.

3 • Selecting mediators

The Biblioteca Viva Program sees the mediator as the agent for cultural action aimed at facilitating access to books and reading. The mediator reads books to children and young people to initiate them in the world of reading. Often it is the mediator who leads children and young people to discover a new, different and unknown universe. So the work of the mediator facilitates the road to reading, so that books are understood as means of expression of authors that may be meaningful for readers.

Anybody from an institution or from the community has a chance to qualify as a mediator if they are interested and have time available. The project coordination team prepares to select mediators by planning for what can be done and announcing an enrollment period for those interested; in the institution itself, and in other organizations and the community, using posters and pamphlets with information on what a mediator does, the period, address for enrollments and requirements to be met by candidates, who must have time available for the training course, supervision and developing the actions for the project as well as links with the institution and the local community.

In this stage, the coordination team also drafts a registration form to be filled out by those interested in



enrolling. It will contain fields for candidate's personal data (name, address, telephone, age, gender, education, profession) and some important questions to provide more knowledge of future mediators and draw up a profile for the group, such as

- What do you know of the Biblioteca Viva Program?
- Why would you like to become a reading mediator?
- Do you have time to take part in a training course?
- Have you ever done voluntary work? If so, what. Describe the work.
- What relationships do you have with the institution and the community?

These data may be tabulated and organized with the purpose of portraying the characteristics of the group selected. Previous knowledge of the profile of this group will be used to assist planning for the training course and monitoring the activity. For the publicity campaign, it is crucial to emphasize that anybody who works in the institution (educator, director, monitor, cleaner, office staff, technician, doctor, nurse, kitchen staff, nursing assistant and others) and appreciates the importance of this activity may apply to be a mediator.

To avoid the risk of discontinuity in the work, a basic criterion in the selection of future mediators, volunteer or staff, is that the candidate be linked and committed to the local community and the institution.

In addition to an institution's own staff, the project also allows the inclusion of mediators already doing voluntary work, or committed people who will give some of their time to the institution without remuneration. These volunteers are selected on the basis of the same criteria as the others. After selection, mediators will take a training program of up to 40 hours.

An important issue is to inform the management of the institution of the needs of the project so that the selected employees are released to take part in the training course, undergo supervision and develop their work.

4 • Training mediators:

The aim of training for reading mediators is to form a group of people qualified for the activity by providing access to theoretical content and practical procedures required to exercise the function. The training course is just the initial stage of this

ongoing process and there will be several initiatives of this nature during project monitoring and supervision.

For each aim, decisions are taken on contents and strategies to be used, material and human resources required, workload and issues for evaluation on a daily basis. If evaluation points to difficulties or shows that aims were not fully achieved, the planning process should be reviewed in terms of strategies, resources or workload for the activities. Therefore, it is advisable to draw up a planning process based on a flexible model that allows the inclusion of changes to adjust the course taken during the training process.

4.1 • Planning the training course

The heterogeneity of a group can make the work richer and more dynamic and contributes to everybody's development. The profile of the group of mediators selected, based on data from enrollment records, is a basic tool to build heterogeneous groups as well as important factor when defining or reformulating strategies.

The need to work with the group permeates all training. It is therefore important to propose activities that help participants get to know each other. One example the multiplier will work with children's literature in the initial part of the training course and favor activity in small groups, because they make it easier for people to speak. In composing these subgroups, he or she chooses people who do not know each other yet. Thus, in addition to working with the specific content of children's literature, the multiplier arranges situations where there will be more group interaction.

Participants' knowledge is constantly broadened and this helps both the multiplier and the future mediators by developing a sense of "belonging to this group." The multiplier leading the training course has to take care to valorize both individual and collective contributions, so that professionals are comfortable about presenting their knowledge and can respect and make use of the diversity of the other participants. This will help at times when difficulties emerge due to differences in ideas or approaches.

Throughout the training course, the multiplier must show that it is not necessary for the group to think in one single way and that its richness is precisely the multiplicity of views and life experiences. This type of situation is often found in work

with any group; therefore, the multiplier should be prepared to work with any emotions and conflicts that may emerge.

The methodology applied in this proposal stimulates the practice of interdisciplinary, collective work and respect for diversity. The implementation of reading mediation in an institution or community presupposes that everybody is involved regardless of their role in everyday routine, since there is no intention of it being configured as an exceptional event, but rather as an everyday practice and part of its routine life. Furthermore, learning to work in a group through experience of the other, valorizing different contributions is important for the consolidation of collective commitment and the implementation of any proposal in a community or institution.

The methodology adopted for the training course uses the same elements and resources as reading mediation with children. Books are made available for the mediators and mediation is performed throughout the training course. The multiplier performs mediation and waits for mediators to respond to the reading before interacting with them and posing the contents proposed in the training program. Mediators have access to several types and manners of transmitting narratives and prioritizing the transmission of written language through reading.

This discussion must be conducted very freely, respecting the approach, ideas and positions of each participant, and the silence of those not wishing to speak. The greatest difficulty during discussions is to capture what was produced, synthesize it and feed it back to the group. The multiplier must raise, point out and discuss important aspects and others that have gone unnoticed.

For each of the specific objectives of the training course, the multiplier analyzes which is the best strategy to adopt, and arranges periods of work in subgroups, individual work, writing, speaking, more concentrated work or meetings of the whole group, while attempting to alternate these phases with relaxing or playful activities.

Dramatizing situations, games and mediators acting different roles are examples of techniques that may be used with the aim of working with behaviors, attitudes, prejudices and other important aspects in their training.

Planning for the training course will include the use of resources such as photographs, texts, videos, drawings and even objects that provoke discussion.

Planning details both activities to be held and strategies to be adopted; one of the activities is a period of experience in the institutions.

The multiplier provides futures mediators with space for sharing experiences in which they can freely join in the situation and experience reading mediation without prejudices in relation to the individuals or context. In group training, whenever possible it is important to have a participant that has proved to be more comfortable with the story reading situation.

As part of the training course, mediators will be asked to draft a planning procedure for mediation based on the content dealt with in the previous days. They should also be given advice on the need to observe and record what happens and how mediation worked, noting any questions, positive and negative aspects, to be reported to the group and discussed during the course. Whenever possible the experience period should not be at the professional's workplace. Before planning the course, the place should have been decided previously by the coordination team.

In contacts with institutions, the project must be presented to the person in charge and the educators to define a working agreement for the learning-by-experience periods since they will involve the children assisted by these educators. The institution should agree to certain conditions for this agreement: an appropriate place for the activity and the possibility of holding learning-by-experience periods with the children for, say, one afternoon, for example.

4.2 · BASIC CONTENT

Basic content taught to the group during the training course will be constantly revisited during the monitoring and supervision of the mediator's activities. Starting from this basic content, and depending on the type of institution involved, other specific themes may emerge during the training course. In a hospital, for instance, the approach taken will necessarily include the subject of health, although this is not basic content for other institutions.

The basic content for the training course includes the following themes

- what characterizes the children with whom the group is working or will be working;
- how does language development in children take place;
- the role of the mediator;
- what is reading mediation;
- books as cultural object and aspects related to printing, illustrations, text, themes;
- difference between read and storytelling;
- what is reading and literature;
- planning for mediation;
- recording and observing;
- evaluation of mediation work.

Note that these contents are important and necessary for mediator training in any context, institutional or non-institutional, urban or rural, where the work is to be developed. The multiplier chooses strategies that help mediators to recognize their own responses to the proposal, books and reading. He or she also poses strategies that allow mediators to experience unexpected situations, listen to children and other adults, and perceive that this knowledge that they are acquiring is subjected to constant alterations. In other words, learning takes place through the way knowledge is transmitted and also based on the relationships established between people.

The valorization of diversity and discovering the other, besides being a condition for this proposal, frequently helps to broaden or transform the universe of all those participating in mediation.

“For the time being, mediation only at home and in my street, which is really like a day care with so many children. But it has been fun. I spend hours with my children’s friends reading and listening to stories. And the good part is that each one brings a different book, we sit in a circle on the sidewalk in front of our house and it’s all fun. It is a great experience. I never thought that this course would change me so much. My relationship with my children was good before but is now even better. I managed to

arouse the interest of my oldest in reading. [...] It was a wonderful experience! “(Rosa Maria de Souza, specialist in Children’s Health, Ministry of Health - Brasília - DF)

The methodology proposed for the training course poses the collective construction of concepts based on the experience of each participant. The themes gradually mesh together and develop. What is discussed one day is always essential to the understanding of what comes next. The understanding of the meaning of reading mediation is based on valorizing the experience of listening and reading stories and is developed on the basis of the different contents dealt with during the training course. The multiplier introduces contents on the basis of the repertoire of experiences found in the group and the practical experience of situations during the training course or the learning-through-experience periods.

4.3 • What happens during a training course: an example

On starting a training course for a new group of teachers, the multiplier wanted an activity that would facilitate the work of different approaches to reading and listening, in other words he wanted to place future mediators in situations of both readers and listeners. So he divided them into subgroups (preferably with classmates who did not know each other) and asked them to choose a book from the proposed collection and had them take turns at reading to the others. After reading, they discussed their experiences of reading and listening to stories.

There was a wide range of impressions and feelings. It was good, pleasurable, a well-known story is relaxing, the feeling that you are transmitting something pleasing. On the other hand, there was talk of anxiety, expectation, tension due to interventions by listeners, the insecurity of not being a good reader.



In relation to listening, the participants reported the following points: they realized that their imagination had “gotten away” and they were moving away from the text, they went home and came back, they felt it was like a caress, it was sheer fun, it was a very non-routine situation; they recalled their own children, pupils, their own childhood, other stories they had listened to or worked with, or how they never have time for pleasure; they realized that certain things had been helpful in this context as a whole, the tone of voice, the chance to choose what to listen to, having experienced the role of reader.

By this time, the group was reaching for its own conclusions. So the multiplier was able to organize the elements needed to systematize certain contents, such as the uniqueness of the listening process for each individual, each participant’s repertoire as revealed by reading, the importance of the context for reading mediation, emotional contents transmitted by stories etc.

The aim of this activity is to facilitate dialogue between practical experience and theoretical contents to be mulled, encourage discussions in subgroups and systematize their results, letting future mediators appropriate these contents, and evaluate and rework their practice. In the course of this process, the role of the multiplier is to ensure freedom of expression, respect for different ideas and positions, and even the right of those not wishing to state an opinion. He or she also faces the challenge of working with the difficulty of capturing, synthesizing and adding important aspects that were not picked up, in order to feed all the output back to the group.

In another example, a multiplier ran a training course for a group of teachers: she proposed a reflection activity on “characteristic of the child” and saw that the group was able to represent the richness and diversity of the world of children in many different ways. However, these teachers were unable to attain a more profound level of reflection on several aspects related to children, precisely due to their proximity and daily experience with them. As their pupils, children are so familiar and well-known to them that they do not trigger more profound reflection and are not even perceived in all their fullness, as is often the case with things we are very close to.

On suggesting an activity with the aim of renewing their view of their pupils, the multiplier saw that they did not attribute the same characteristics to children. Children were described as active, surprising, authentic, obstinate, persistent, naive, simple, easily influenced, creative, dreamers, experiencing the world, waking us up, looking

after us, caring and forgiving... Pupils were described as rebels, surprising, undisciplined, shy, aggressive, selfish, anxious, worried, unpredictable, capable, not paying attention, needing affection... The teachers group forgot that pupils are children and children are pupils.

To work on this issue, the multiplier proposed an activity that prompted the teachers to remember their childhood and their behavior as children who could play freely and how they had behaved as pupils at school. Using these reports of past experiences, the multiplier got the group to think about why children's behavior in classrooms, in the presence of teachers, was so different from their behavior when playing freely.

The teachers have a conception of the child based on their classroom behavior, so they almost always tend to see them as pupils, which is only natural. The work of reading mediation will surely help teachers gain a broader view of the child that exists in each pupil. This will allow them to understand children better during periods of relaxation and daydreaming associated with stories and reading.

4.4 • Monitoring and supervision

After training, the multiplier supervises the work of mediators and directly monitors their activities to continue to the educational process. Monitoring may take different forms such as written or other records, meetings, observation and/or joint work in reading mediation situations. Monitoring will give the multiplier a chance to see how the mediator interacts with children, the latter's' reactions during mediation, and the contexts and difficulties the mediator is facing in developing the work.

Another issue to be observed concerns the institutional relationships that may intervene in the development of the project, such as situations in which the mediator is not getting the necessary support and collaboration from the institution or its members.

Another situation that can be organized to prompt interchange among mediators from different institutions is to arrange visits to do reading work (or observe it) and see mediation in different contexts. Mediators may talk about their characteristics as mediators and the children they work with or the conditions under which activities are developed. This knowledge is crucial to ongoing development and for planning supervision through systematic meetings between multipliers and groups of mediators.

“When I began to develop reading work with children, I admit that I had many questions in relation to aspects such as caring for the books, unruly behavior by some children and even the approach taken by the teacher as a mediator. As the project developed, and we had [supervision] meetings, these worries were eased, and at the same time, the work was enriched and became very pleasurable.” (Teacher - EMEI (Municipal School of Elementary Education) Elisa Prêda Scarponi - São Caetano do Sul - SP)

During the supervision period, the meetings are a form of continuous evaluation of working procedures, with the aim of providing theoretical and practical support for mediators. Supervision may be planned on the basis of the problems and difficulties detected in monitoring and mediators’ and multipliers’ notes and records, defining aims, contents to be worked with and strategies to be used at monthly meetings.

Those meetings are crucial for all to see that they are not alone and that others have difficulties too. The interchange of experiences enriches everybody’s vision and the experience of the group feeds back into the project.



5 • KEEPING RECORDS

In the reading mediation work and mediator training, keeping notes or records is essential not only for the mediator and the multiplier but also for supervision and evaluation of the process and results of the project, for the following reasons:

- it encourages reflection, obliges us to verbalize and systematize what has been observed;
- it facilitates change, analysis and interpretation of what was observed;
- it facilitates the identification of progress and difficulties faced by each child and the group;
- it provides elements to identify points of departure and outcomes;
- it provides clues for the definition of possible and/or necessary changes in the process taking place with the group of children;
- it provides information on the different practices in each group and with each mediator;
- it organizes accumulated knowledge;
- it systematizes contents over a certain period of time;
- it helps evaluate working procedures in relation to the child, the group and the mediator.

Record keeping must be seen by the group as an instrument that contributes to the work and not as a mere bureaucratic formality. The same aspects should be noted in relation to the group as a whole. In each context, the mediator observes and records each fact in relation to the initial mediation sessions whether the children are expressing themselves more than before, whether they are more uninhibited in talking about themselves, whether stories they listened to are being commented on, whether they performed better in school, whether they improved relations among themselves or with the mediator, whether they are taking more interest in the readings, whether they lost interest in the stories, and any other aspects that may be seen as significant.

Monitoring may take place in the same location as the reading activity, or at a distance when necessary, through exchanging records and notes, phone calls or e-mail.

“Observing the children this month, I saw that they are increasingly interested in “reading”, browsing, or having contact with books. They are showing increasing interest in reading. When they come in, they always browse and during breaks between one activity and another, they will go to the corner

to get a book. They are paying more attention when I tell a story or when they listen to classmates telling one.

Fabiola always browses Fernando Sabino's Os melhores contos.

At the end of the story O morango vermelho, o ratinho e o urso, João Pedro cried "but where's the bear?"

When I started to tell the story of Little Yellow Riding-Hood, Fabiana cried "but isn't her hat red?"

These are some examples of the different situations arising in my classroom. (Marieta Carneiro dos Santos, teacher of pre-schoolers (aged 5) in São Caetano do Sul, SP)

On the basis of this work of keeping records, the supervision staff posed the following comments in response:

"Dear Marieta,

Having books accessible books at any time, picking them up and browsing during breaks or on arrival or departure, is important for children to become readers.

If we want our pupils to like to read and take an interest in reading, they must have an opportunity to be around books in their everyday lives.

Reading must not be sporadic, it must be part of the children's everyday routine and it must be pleasurable for them. And this is what is happening in your classroom. As you yourself say, they are becoming more and more interested and paying more attention when listening to stories. Since they are very young, the time they will listen to a story seems to be short, but is gradually increasing as they become more familiar with narrative language. Contact with mediators is another important aspect of this work. Reading mediation sessions are charged with affectivity, they bring people closer together and help the children to express themselves and pose their own opinions. This also helps educators to get to know their pupils better.

When Fabiola browses the Fernando Sabino book, she is browsing a book for "big people." Perhaps she will ask you to read a little, like Ana's pupils did? The children's comments show us that they are attentive to details that we adults often do not pick up. They are super observers and we do not always give them a chance to speak and show how much they know.

What else you have been observing in pupils' relations with books? Did you sense any change in the children's behavior? What about their vocabulary, their repertoire, the stories they tell, their drawings? Did certain pupils in particular draw your attention, since the reading sessions started?

We look forward to your next report and we would like to say that you are doing very fine work. It was wonderful to be able to read to your children during the last supervision session. They were participative, interested and very friendly.

Hug and see you soon." (response from supervision team, São Paulo)

In each context, it is important to evaluate which are the relevant, essential and significant data to be noted. The important ones are those that show the working procedure. When keeping records, it is crucial to take into consideration each child, the group and the mediator.

Written records are one way of recording and discussing the work developed, but there are others - such as photography. Photos can show different scenes from situations that occur during reading mediation and/or the process of implementation of the project. A photograph reflects the perception of what is relevant for the photographer at a certain point in time; if he or she so wishes, the author may show a sequence of images that bring out the process for the work.



Video is another means of record keeping used in the work of the Biblioteca Viva Program. Video poses a different kind of reflection since we view a situation that has taken place. We can control images, and pass over parts that do not interest us, or repeat a certain scene or situation, or choose one that express important ideas and may provoke ideas or criticisms. The sight, sound, movement and mood of a scene helps us to understand and learn about behavior, responses and the spoken expression of the people involved and the work as a whole.

All types of records that document and systematize the work developed may also be used for publicizing, evaluating, training and communicating.

6 • Evaluating the project

Evaluation is part of a working procedure and has the aim of checking whether the method produces the results expected and is reaching the proposed objectives. Evaluation provides a continuous review of the work, since it systematically points to the aspects that should be reviewed during the course of the activities. The absence of evaluation may harm and/or hinder the progress of the work.

“I think the evaluations that were omitted would have been important for the interchange of experience among institutions, sharing the strategies being used, and finding new solutions in the places where they were not working well. It is really unfortunate that we did not have these interchanges on the development of the process in the organizations involved along with the educators and children.” - Creche Munir Abbud - São Paulo - SP)

There are several ways of evaluating the project. People may choose the best instruments and the best way of developing evaluation. In the Biblioteca Viva Program we used systematic meetings to facilitate conversation and interchange between participants and records in the form of notes, photos or audiovisual media.

Records of mediations and supervision may document data that is important for reflecting on actions, such as the children’s behavior, the difficulties faced by mediators and the search for solutions to problems in order to enhance the work.

To conduct an evaluation, we consider all factors that are part of the work, from the means used (infrastructure, qualified personnel, material, books etc) to the planning process.

The reading project has an objective to be reached. It poses the means to reach it and may be evaluated in relation to the process (the way the work is developed) and in relation to the qualitative and quantitative results obtained. Evaluating the working procedure means systematically evaluating the performance of mediators and multipliers, the suitability of the books and material used, the conditions in the work setting and the involvement of parents and the community in the project, in order to enhance the work.

“At the end of the month of September we held a parents meeting to evaluate and go over some points in our work [...]. It caused quite an impression when we talked about the books, and how the children behave when listening to stories, which stories they liked most, what the children gained and learned in contact with the books etc. It was a wonderful experience, some mothers said that the children come home talking about the stories, comment on what happened and talk a lot about the stories they like most. We saw that the mothers were very enthusiastic. Then we showed some of the books we got from the Biblioteca Viva Program [...]. The mothers were fascinated, some asked for the titles of the books to buy for their children. I believe that this conversation prompted many parents to realize the value of books and how they interest children. “ (- Creche Nossa Senhora Mãe dos Homens - Brasília - DF)





Evaluation of results should be based on both quantitative and qualitative indicators. Indicators are composed on the basis of the aims and objectives. For instance, if the project poses two hours of reading mediation a week for a group of children, the indicator will be 'number of hours reading in the month.' Another example if the activity poses reading mediation for a certain number of children a month, the indicator will be 'number of children involved in mediation in the month.' If the aim is to improve the development of the children's oral language in a certain period of time, the indicator will be 'number of children that improved oral expression in so many months.' Although the result is quantitative, the indicator will be measuring a qualitative result.

Quantitative results are easier to define and identify, whereas qualitative results require a longer period of activity to see their effects in children. However, these effects can be observed by adults

(educator, mediator, parents and others) who are in contact with the child, through changes in behavior and children's responses to reading, the acquisition and enlargement of vocabulary, the development of oral language, performance at school, an expanded imaginary and universe of knowledge.

It is important that the mediator or educator has a chart that shows children at the beginning of implementation of the project, and uses qualitative indicators such as those mentioned above or others to evaluate their development after a certain period of time; thus the mediator can evaluate each child's development starting from its own evolution.

At the end of every semester, the multiplier, together with the mediators and members of the institution, may organize meetings to discuss these results and draw up a report evaluating the project. This report may be based on records of the activities of the mediators and supervision work done by the multipliers, as well as discussions of results by the mediator group with the multiplier and records of meetings with the children's parents and people from the community involved in the project.

Evaluation provides a situation conducive to education and helps improve the work being done. It also helps to assemble material for use in publicizing the work that has been developed.

“This month we got a very good response from a mother. She said her daughter had not liked studying and had not been interested in reading. Now, there is no need to persuade her. She reads and does all her homework, and her school marks are much better. The children that have been with the organization since 1996, when the Biblioteca Viva Program started, take home three books a week, which is the limit, because if they would take more if they could. Most of these children read those three books even before the end of the loan period and get new books. There is a very important point these children now show interest in books. “ (- Centro Social Romília Maria [ages 7 -14] - Campinas - SP)

7 • MOST FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. Can I...

... ask the children to do activities after reading a book, such as drawings or ask them to answer questions about the story?

If our aim is to have the children become readers and have a pleasurable relationship with books, we need to think about reading as unrestricted and not impose or create any type of requirement or evaluate what they are reading.

Why should reading be free? Let us respond with another question after watching a film or going to a show, do we have to do a drawing or answer a questionnaire, or tell others what we thought, to see whether we really understood the film?

When we think about an activity after reading a story, we are putting reading in the place of a pedagogic activity that needs another activity to be complete. Is it not enough for the reader to just read the story? Is it not enough for the child to just hear the story and look at the illustrations?

Not that it is “wrong” to do an activity after reading. In fact, the issue is not whether it’s right or wrong, but that point is that reading a book in itself is already a major activity. The child that listens to a story is in contact with the written language, new words and different contents.

... use other resources, such as a musical instrument or puppets?

Books are complete objects in themselves. There is no need for support from other elements to please the children or to be read. Adults read without needing these accessories. Using puppets and other things when we read to children is like telling them that a book alone is not sufficient. If a book is good, it will please its readers without the mediator having to think of parallel activities. On the other hand, we also know that children pay attention in different ways to adults. They do not necessarily need to look at the mediator to listen and pay attention. When we use accessories, we believe that we attract the child’s attention to the story. This is not always the case. They may like the puppets but not the stories.

... dramatize the reading?

Reading doesn’t need to be dramatized, since the narrative itself prompts the child to

imagine what happens in the story. They are all capable of imagining voices, places and situations, without the mediator needing to interpret or even explain what is happening.

Finally, if the children want to draw, play, sing etc. during or after reading, if they imitate animals, if a story or a poem triggers self expression it is not wrong or forbidden. We just have to ask whether what we are proposing does not underestimate the children's capacity to understand stories and ask question by themselves, without the obligation to answer questions or do activities.

... so how do I know if a child has understood what was read?

In the same way that we observe how a child develops - by interacting, observing, being there if the child wants to talk. If the mediator is available and attentive, he will see whether a child likes a certain book, or whether a book is liked by one child but disliked by another etc. After reading a story, we always feel that we do not know how to evaluate whether the children "got anything" out of the activity or not. We are not sure if they have learned anything. If the children don't say anything, we are left with a sensation of emptiness, as if we had omitted something. Each child can interact with the book in different ways, by expressing emotions, discoveries or ideas that the story has triggered, which will often emerge through dialogue with other children or the mediator.

2. What if children dislike a book or a story?

Not liking a book, or wanting the reading to end halfway or before the end, is neither negative nor a sign that we have failed! On the contrary, we see that the children that begin to have contact with books also begin to make choices and decide what they do or do not want to read. Being a reader involves this too. It involves deciding what we like or do not like. Often children go through a phase in which they want the same book whereas sometimes they want innovation all the time.



3. Can I interrupt a reading if children ask me to?

Yes, children will sometimes lose interest in the middle of a book or become tired, want to change the book etc. This is normal and acceptable. The mediator can always interrupt the activity to talk to the children and ask if they want a different book or prefer to read alone etc.

4. Can I read only books that I like to read myself?

Mediators will have their own literary taste based on reading a wide range of books or depending on their experiences in life. In the same way, for children to acquire their own taste and make their own choices, they must have an opportunity to get to know the largest possible variety of books and they must not be denied access to a wide range of literary genres. This does not mean that mediators cannot select and read their own favorite books to children, while not forgetting to offer the diversity of the collection. It is sometimes necessary to repeat a story that the mediator does not like so much, but children may love it. If mediators choose only what they like, they may be restricting access to reading, instead of enlarging it.

5. What if children tear up books?

Books are made of paper. Not only children can damage books. Adults can too. If books are kept in a very damp or leaky room, or if we spill coffee... finally, books do not last forever and if they are heavily used, they are more worn down, which is a good sign. But tearing up a book deliberately is a different matter. A child may handle a book and tear it by accident. Babies and very small children

usually put a book in their mouth, or smell it, bite it, hit it, or throw it on the ground... that is their way of getting to know a new object just as they do with toys and other objects. Sometimes they make books into toys (planes, hats, steering wheels, houses, etc.). Or they tear a book because there is a struggle for the same book, or because they find it amusing to



“cut out illustrations” or for some other reason, such as rage, jealousy, the need to draw attention to themselves etc. Gradually children begin to realize that a book can also be a toy, since it contains stories that are amusing, funny, sad, cheerful, beautiful, etc. They understand that stories have a sequence, and all the pages have their importance. In other words, a child that has contact with books knows their meaning and begins to take care of them in an appropriate manner. But this process of a book becoming meaningful takes place precisely when somebody reads and lets them handle books. When incidents happen, with children of any age, the mediator can talk to them and show them that a book is a whole piece of work, the story has a beginning, a middle and an end and that if one part is missing, whether it’s a drawing or a page, the story is incomplete. Then he or she explains that they will take the book for repair and may also ask the children to help repair it.

6. Can I read for just one child in a group?

Yes, there is no problem as long as the mediator is attentive to the group. In institutions or public spaces, mediators usually work in twos, threes or small groups, depending on the number of children. This facilitates the work and means that mediation is performed in an individualized manner, which can be very pleasurable. In hospitals, individual mediation is more frequent. On the other hand, even children playing and concentrating on another activity may be listening carefully to the story, even when they do not seem to be following it. Some of them will often give an opinion on the reading, to the great surprise of the mediator. Another common event is that when a child sees attention given to another child, they want to be read to in the mediators lap.

Babies and very young children need and appreciate much more individualized reading.

7. What about separating books by age group?

When we start to read for children regularly and they begin to have access to many different books, we find that what catches their interest and gets their attention varies greatly from one child to another. What decides whether a child likes a book or not is not governed by age, neither the children’s age nor the mediator’s age.

Very young children, who still do not know how to read, like illustrated books. But older ones who know how to read like them too. The younger kids like to listen to stories even if the book has no illustrations.

The subject or theme of the book may be more or less appropriate and the child itself will say whether it likes it or not, or want to continue listening or not. Instead of us restricting children's access to books, separating only what an adult sees as good for them, we can show and make available a large number of books of different types and let the children see them and decide what they want. Adults love books that are classed as children's books. Children love books classed as adult books, even if it is just to hold them, browse and pretend they already know how to read them. Children may play at being able to read in the same way that they "pretend to be mom and child" or know how to "drive a truck" etc".

8. What do we do when children ask questions that a mediator does not know how to answer?

Books and stories may pose words and new situations; they enlarge dialogue and prompt children to ask lots of things. It is important for mediator to know what they do not know - and to accept that fact. This is a fact of reality and from this point onward they may transform their reality, since in attempting to find the answer, they will be enlarging their knowledge and repertoire. So there is no problem in admitting ignorance of a subject, as long as a mediator tells the children that they will research and have the answer for the next session.

9. What places are most appropriate for reading mediation?

Reading mediation should take place in a certain physical space that has been organized as a pleasant place, where children feel comfortable and free to handle books, move around, approach the mediator, and read or listen to a reading. Whenever the mediator lays a rug or sheet and places books and cushions on the floor, children start to understand the meaning of this situation, because the environment is much cozier, and they associate reading time with a pleasant and informal situation. But there is no standard physical space for developing the activity, since mediators work in different institutions and places. Mediation can be performed even if the place is not ideal. Some institutions provide a fixed place a room with a rug, cushions and shelves so the books can be displayed and children can see their covers. When there is no fixed place, mediation can take place in the

same space as other activities, such as a playroom, dining hall or sports hall, or a classroom. In hospitals, the activity may be held in the lobby, waiting rooms, corridors or rooms where the children are interned or being submitted to a medical procedure. In public or open spaces, such as parks, gardens and squares, mediators choose a place under a tree, under a marquee, or on the lawn, lay a rug and place books and cushions on it to prepare the space for the activity.

10. What is the most appropriate way to store and display books?

There is no single way or right way of storing and displaying books. If we have a specific place for a library, the suggestion is to display the books at a height where all the kids can choose and reach for books. If possible, the thinner books should have their covers facing outwards, since they have no spine. In schools or institutions that do not have a room available for a library, books may be divided in different rooms, in boxes, placed on carts or small shelves. We have seen books placed in baskets or shelves in the reception area of an institution, which ensures that not only the children but the parents too can see them and read them. Children too can make suggestions on how to organize books or help to store them and this brings them even closer to books.



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