The Living Book – Augmenting Reading for Life
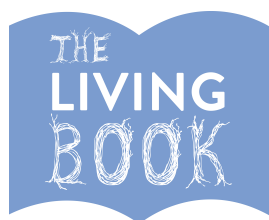
NEWSLETTER n. 2

Editorial

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The Living Book is an Erasmus+ funded project that aims at the development of innovative tools that will enhance reading for young people in Europe.

Research shows that in the EU, 1/5 of 15 year-olds are low achievers in reading, while, reading has fallen out of fashion with youngsters all over Europe.
In the UK, in one recent year the number of 11 to 17 year olds who do not read at all has more than doubled from 13% to 27%. Poor reading performance combined with a general disinterest for reading has long-term consequences, both for the individual and for society.

Reading is a primary skill, the one that allows us to 'be' and live in a complex world, to make free and responsible choices as citizens, to work at a higher level, and to enjoy our lives more fully.

Inspired by the Internet of Things, which refers to the possibility of connecting the internet to the world of physical objects, the project wants to connect the physical book to the digital world to turn it into a 'Living Book'. An intense-lived experience for young readers who can participate, transform and augment what they are reading, thus applying digital competences, collaborating with peers, developing reading skills and, ultimately, being more engaged in book reading.

The project aims to tackle this with the development of the Living Book blended approach. That is a comprehensive framework for developing teachers' ability to support students in growing the reading skills and love for reading and to help parents back this strategy at home.

The Project's Consortium is made up by:
- European University Cyprus
- Agrupamento de Escolas de Vila Nova de Paiva, Portugal
- Comune di Vicenza, Italy
- Forum del libro, Italy
- Dimotiko scholeio Makedonitissas III, Cyprus
- GRYD LTD, UK
- Scoala Gimnaziala "Constantin Parfene", Romania
- Tartu Kivilinna Kool, Esthonia
- Universidade Da Beira Interior, Portugal

I hope you enjoy our newsletter!

Maria Mavrotheris-Meletiou

Director of the Research Laboratory in ICT-Enhanced Education - European University Cyprus
https://www.euc.ac.cy

THE LIVING BOOK

1. The Living Book project SO FAR

Living Book was launched on September 1st 2016, with a project duration of 36 months. Project execution was divided into several phases and transversal work packages, following a clear and shared methodology. This was in order to achieve the project's expected results and to ensure a correct balance of responsibilities among partners.

PHASE 1 INCEPTION

In this phase, project structures were put in place establishing the project governance and day-to-day management, guidelines, internal management, reporting tools, documents such as the annual operational plan, the M&E framework and a general dissemination plan were prepared. This phase lasted 1 month and was launched with an online meeting among partners and closed during the 1st meeting in Cyprus.

PHASE 2 BUILDING OWNERSHIP AND INVOLVING TARGET GROUPS

During this phase we developed further the dialogue with the target groups, which already started before the project submission. Care was taken to involve teachers and students by establishing a permanent group of teachers in all project related territories to participate in the design of IOs, and its meetings will continue to be held throughout project implementation. This phase was pivotal for the project in order to ensure ownership by project's beneficiaries and to align the intellectual outputs with the real needs of teachers and learners.

PHASE 3 – CREATION OF RESOURCES AND TOOLS
During Phase III, the consortium designed and developed a line of research-based curricular and instructional materials aimed at strengthening the profile and competences of teachers from primary and upper lower secondary schools (ages 9-15) in effectively integrating the Living Book approach into their classroom activities. The consortium also developed the content for a blended training course targeting teachers and other educators involved in parent training activities, on how to promote parental involvement in pro-reading activities. In parallel to the development of the Augmented Teacher and Augmented Parent-Trainer course content, partners have also been jointly working on the technical design and implementation of the infrastructure and services for the Living Book Digital Library, which will support the project activities and outputs by offering open access to the professional development courses' content and pedagogical approach, and to various other links and resources.

PHASE 4 – BUILDING CAPACITY (M18)

This phase aimed at assuring at the territorial level an adequate level of knowledge and competences on the side of partners' staff to manage the testing phase with teachers and students. A Joint Staff Training event, designed as a 5-day capacity building workshop for staff of participating organisations, was organised in late February in CY with this specific aim. A total of 16 people attended the event.

PHASE 5 – SECTORIAL DISSEMINATION (M13-M16)

Phase 5 Involves the project partners' commitment to disseminate the project outputs to stakeholders in the educational community that could benefit from them. On March 24, a hands-on sectorial dissemination seminar targeting professionals working in the school sector was organized at EUC. During the seminar, which was attended by around 80 professionals working mainly in the school sector, a public presentation and exploitation of work was carried out. Initial contact was also established with teachers willing to take the teacher training and parent-training courses and to engage in follow-up classroom experimentation (Phase 6).

THE LIVING BOOK

2. The GUIDELINES of the Living Book

The Guidelines are the first intellectual output of the project, and have been developed mainly by Forum del Libro.

Their purpose is to offer a description of the assumptions, methodology and tools of the Living book project. More specifically, the guidelines consider the role of enhanced reading as a strategy for fostering interest and love for reading among students (age range 9-15) and for bridging the gap between traditional and digital reading ecosystems. Our aim is to connect the habit of reading books – i.e. complex textual content – with the digital media landscape and the digital learning tools already used by students, while leaving them completely free to choose the preferred reading environment (paper or digital).

The draft index of the Guidelines has been discussed at the Cyprus meeting, and the first (almost) complete draft version was discussed during the Vaslui meeting. In the last few months, Forum del Libro has improved the draft version, taking into account the discussion among the partners during the Vaslui meeting, adding the section on parents & teachers and expanding the sections on Special Educational Needs, on reading groups and on augmented reading. The latest additions take into account the beta version of the platform. The guidelines have been originally developed as a PowerPoint presentation, in order to simplify the discussion, and have been later converted into a stand-alone document, which was presented and discussed in the Cyprus multiplier event.

The guidelines are now completed and are ready for the last revision of the text by a professional English translator and for the translation in all the languages of the project.

Prof. Gino Roncaglia,
Forum del Libro

Figure - Prof. Gino Roncaglia (Forum del Libro) during a presentation of a draft version of the guidelines at the International Conference "The open Library" - Milano, Palazzo delle Stelline, March 2017

THE LIVING BOOK

3. Augmenting the reading experience with The LIVING LIBRARY

We are excited to launch the first version of The Living Library'! This is a key output for the project and will help to truly augment the reading the experience. The aim is to blend reading with rich media content so as to increase engagement in books and create a love of reading in 9 to 15 year olds.

The Living Library is an online platform with a collection of book titles, suggested by educators from around Europe. Within each book title children can add media which they have created, based on that book. The media could be a video recreation of a scene, an audio retelling or critique of the book, stop-motion animation, user-created images inspired by the book, a Scratch coded animation or game, a 3D model of an artefact or scene in a book, or almost any type of media that pupils and teachers can think of!

The Living Library is also social! Users can become friends, create reading groups, events, post updates, send messages and more. Members will be updated in their profile when other members post comments to their content and they can follow any of their favourite book titles in the Library to see what other users are posting.

The ability to create online reading groups is one of the unique features of the platform. Teachers can create private reading groups for their pupils, using the social platform to interact, share and comment on the book they are reading together. Or members can create public reading groups to allow anybody who is reading that book to join the group and share their experience. We are excited to offer this feature to the education community and look forward to pupils and schools from across Europe interacting with their experiences of popular books.

The platform is available in 6 languages – English, Italian, Greek, Romanian, Portuguese and Estonian. Each language version has its own library of book titles. So users can search for and add content in their own language, or the platform could also be used in language lessons by viewing, sharing and creating content in other languages. Many book titles are available in more than one language. On the book title page you can see the other language versions available and click to see the content that members are posting in each of the other languages.

The Living Library is not only a hub for creating and sharing media content from a book it is also the home for the other resources produced by the project:
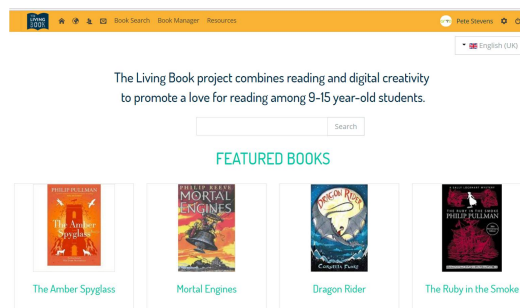- Lesson Plans
- Elearning
- Toolkits
- Publications

In our next newsletter we will have more details on all of the different resources available on The Living Library.

We are currently in the testing phase of The Living Library and we would like your help to test it. Teachers can sign up to the platform as 'Librarians', which will allow them to add new books to the platform. You can also ask your pupils to sign up as 'Members', either using their email address or a registration code available from us (no email required).

Pete Stevens – GRYD ltd

To register simply follow this link: www.thelivinglibrary.eu/register

Figure – The Living Library Homepage

4. The Living Book LESSON PLANS

The lessons plans will give to the interested teachers a framework to develop the students' reading skills, based on the concept of blended methodology - motivation to reading using digital competences. The plans provide teachers with examples and ideas of how to integrate the living book methodologies into their classroom activities. The practical plans wil be organised in modules divided according to the students' age, both for the humanistic disciplines and sciences/technologies subject areas. They will be integrated in the platform and freely downloadable by teachers.

During the second transnational meeting in Vaslui, each partner school presented good practice models related to the project objectives, based on the own experience and environment, in order to identify a common lesson plan framework.

The partner schools are testing activities based on the Living Book concept and methodology. The strategies are based on enhanced reading, social reading and inclusive reading, the pillars of the Living Book approach. They will deliver model activities detailed in lessons plans on enhancing the students' motivation towards reading and improving reading skills, strengthening a cluster of transversal competencies such as digital skills, learning to learn, critical thinking, cooperative and collaborative skills.

The lessons plans will be revised and enhanced in the next months.

Dorina Nemtanu, Scoala Gimnaziala "Constantin Parfene", Romania

*Figure - A reading group
in the specific room designed for reading
in the library
of Agrupamento de Escolas de
Vila Nova de Paiva,
Portugal*

THE
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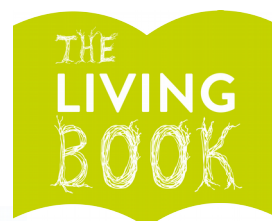
Co-funded by the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

5. BE AN AUGMENTED TEACHER

The Living Book needs teachers from different disciplines (Humanities, ICT and Technology) to test our resources!
We need you!

WHY SHOULD YOU ENGAGE WITH US?

• To experiment a new model in your classroom to convince the most reluctant students to start reading while strengthening their digital skills and creativity

• To join flexible and high quality training opportunities and courses for your professional development

• To get a Certification as Augmented Teacher and support us in disseminating the model and resources in your territory

• To strengthen your European profile and boost the internationalisation of your school by joining a local team of highly qualified teachers

GET INVOLVED!
http://thelivingbook.eu

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK!
https://www.facebook.com/TheLivingBookProject

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THE LIVING BOOK