

Where does SimbirChit walk? Development program of children's reading in the Ulyanovsk region (Russia)

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The Ulyanovsk region became the most reading region in Russia in 2015 and got the title of literature leader.

Since 2012 **the development program of children's reading "SimbirChit – Simbirsk reader"** is implemented in our region. It is oriented to rallying efforts of creatively working librarians in the region for creation of informational and reader culture of pupils and their parents. **SimbirChit** is a funny character with a book in its hands whose outline repeats the contour of the map of Ulyanovsk region; it appeals to children and adults, and it is recognized by everyone and everywhere.

It was created in 2009 by 4 librarians from school and children libraries of the region. They have painted it, they gave book in its hands, and they invented its name and composed text and music of SimbirChit's hymn. To become a friend of SimbirChit a person must be fond of books, know the history of the own region, to love its native country, and to guard the environment and nature. The book doesn't carry only the information: it also has moral and ethical influence on the personality. Without giving prepared recipes, it develops the ability to observe, to compare, to evaluate, and to conclude. Common reading and discussion of books contributes to the development of reader's activity, it provides the collective exchange of opinions, and it

presupposes reflection of contents of literary works. The book is a very powerful means for children's socialization because by the example of its heroes it teaches to enjoy life in its whole variety and to give the joy to other people, in spite of any personal difficulties. Nowadays there are a lot of problems in the Russian education. And one of these problems is a world-view contradiction between book culture of the teacher and informational and television culture of children. The mission of the school teacher, the teacher of philology, the form master, the school librarian in solving this problem is to help the child, by waking up interest and excitement in the soul, to develop a liking for word, to adore its beauty and multidimensionality, and to direct the child to the cautious, responsible attitude to the word.

This program was begun still in 2009 when the regional experimental place in the school of Bolshiye Klyuchishchi village, Ulyanovsk district, began its work. Within the years 2009 – 2013 an innovation scientific and research project “Social partnership as means of development of reader culture and informational culture of pupils” has been realized (the research manager is candidate of historical sciences N.A. Barsukova). The successful school work on this program was highly evaluated by the regional council of experts, and within the years 2013 – 2015 the school carried out this work as a regional methodological center. Since September 2015 the school had a new scientific and research program – “School Informational and library space in the system of social partnership as a factor of development of cultural and educational needs of pupils”.

Due to its scientific and research activities the school has presented innovational projects and programs for development of children's reading on regional, Russian and international level; and also including the program “SimbirChit – Simbirsk reader”.

Within 8 years of its existence SimbirChit became our reader's brand. The movement “SimbirChit – Simbirsk reader” is permeating widely across the Ulyanovsk region. Children paint the SimbirChit and sew stuffed toys with pleasure. At school it becomes fashionable to bear the badge of “SimbirChit”. Pupils prepare paper baseball caps with the figure of “SimbirChit”, and during celebrations they sing the song “I am SimbirChit” and swing flags with its figure.

The regional branch of Association of School librarians (created in 2008) since 2009 takes part in the **International month of school libraries**. Every year, since 2010, in October in the beautiful village of Bolshiye Klyuchishchi (20 kilometers far from Ulyanovsk) takes place the **regional celebration of reading “SimbirChit invites every one of you”**. On a visit to SimbirChit

come winners of competitions, the best readers, who get a honorary badge “SimbirChit” from organizers. Each year the number of participants is increasing. Traditionally specialists of municipal libraries of the region take part in the celebration.

The ceremonial opening of the **VIII Regional celebration of reading “SimbirChit invites every one of you!” in 2017** took part in the Cultural center of Bolshiye Klyuchishchi village. Standing on the stage pupils called guest’s attention to the fact that the communication between friends takes part mostly by the phone. Now we read much less, and we forget the Russian language. But our pupils don’t want to put up with this, they ask librarians for help. The Book is helping to everyone.

Our partners and helpers are permanent sponsors of the celebration of reading. This is the Association of School libraries of the Russian world (RuSLA), Russkoye Slovo” (Russian word) Publishing house, “Pechatny Dvor” (Printing Yard) Regional printing office.

Workshops and educational programs of librarians and resource specialists of the mobile Complex of informational and librarian service of the Ulyanovsk regional research library; Ulyanovsk regional library for children and youth and other libraries of the region; creative workshops of teachers in schools and kindergartens, children’s Convalescent center take place on interactive places of the Cultural center, “Zolotoy Klyuchik” (Golden key) kindergarten, and secondary school. Over 1500 children, parents, teachers and librarians took part in the celebration of reading in 2017. Now we are preparing for the IX celebration of reading.

In our region the regional competition “**Walking around the native region with SimbirChit**” is carried out. Pupils learn the history of their native region and native village, they collect the material for the school museum, they take part in regional conferences and in Russian and international competitions as well. Children create and implement their own projects: “The village history in titles of streets”, “The river of my childhood” and other projects; their informational support is provided by school libraries.

In the summer in some region schools is organized a health camp for children with the reading program “**Summer with SimbirChit**”; this program allows pupils to show their abilities in carrying out interesting events in connection with reading.

Sections of SimbirChit are created in school libraries of the region. In the children’s library in the Novoulyanovsk city the club of junior pupils “SimbirChit” works actively; in this club children read their favourite books and adapt them for stage.

In the Bolshiye Klyuchishchi village on October 31st 2017 took place the second **celebration and competition “Reading mother – reading village”**; the first event was organized in October 2016. This competition is a part of the big Russian project called “Reading mother – reading country” which is organized by the RuSLA. In this year the number of participants was half as many than last year. 17 families of the village came to the assembly hall of the school to provide support to young mothers who read aloud for their children. The mothers were divided into 2 groups: mothers who read for children in preschool age and mothers who read for children in primary school age. Two independent staff of judges with separate prize pool – adults’ jury and children’s jury. Winners of the competition “Reading mother – reading village” were awarded with certificates of honor, diplomas, and presents provided by the village administration, sets of books and magazines provided by RuSLA. As a present for the library of the kindergarten was packaged a set of new books and magazines.

On November 23th 2017 in the kindergarten “Zolotoy Klyuchik” of the Bolshiye Klyuchishchi village took place the first **competition “We read together with the father”** and had a big success.

13 families with children in the age from two up to five years old took part in the competition. There worked 3 staff of judges who gave the own independent estimations. It was a magnificent holiday!

Among them, grand-mothers also demanded to organize a competition of reading grand-mothers for them. Thus, the slogan is true: reading family – reading country!

Such kind of events like such competitions as “Reading mother – reading village”, “We read together with the father”, Regional celebration of reading “SimbirChit invites every one of you” give moments of solidarity of souls; they bring together parents and children spiritually and

morally and create good mood in the family, in the kindergarten, in the school, in the village – everywhere where people appreciate books.

The teaching staff of the village school carries out **scientific and research activities** on the base of the school library since 2009; the Regional experimental place for development of librarian and informational medium for contemporary school for children's reading has been created there. The research manager is N.A. Barsukova. The topic of study in 2015 – 2018 is “Informational and librarian medium of the school in the system of social partnership as a resource of development of cultural and educational needs of pupils”. Based on results of work were prepared the scientific report and a book of methodic recommendations for teachers and librarians.

In the Ulyanovsk region the Plan of interdepartmental interaction of school and municipal libraries is developed every year. We work together for children's reading. In 2017 **the program of development of children's reading “SimbirChit – Simbirsk reader”** was included into the regional program of support of childrens' and youth reading in the Ulyanovsk region for the years 2017 – 2026 **“Reading childhold”** as it's constituent element.

We believe that in the Ulyanovsk region the rather good social and informational basis has been formed which allows to develop a strategy of increasing the status of the book and the library. This experience is transferred not only to the region but also all over Russia in general, it is published regularly in professional magazines, and it got the high evaluation of specialists. We are ready for international cooperation.

At the ROMA TRE University (Roma, Italy) on December 15th 2015 my lecture and conference took place on invitation of the chair of bibliography and library science. The special interest was attracted by the program of development of children's reading in the Ulyanovsk region “SimbirChit – Simbirsk reader”. Participants of the conference got badges with the figure of SimbirChit, and its plush copy was presented to the chair of bibliography and library science of the ROMA TRE University. (I would like to present such badges and a fluffy toy “SimbirChit” also to my Turkish colleagues). We hope that Italian students and teachers of informational and librarian faculty will prolong the acquaintance with our program, and maybe they will also cooperate with school librarians. For now special projects “Walking across Italy with SimbirChit”

have been prepared in our two school libraries and in one children's library; these projects are oriented to the acquaintance of pupils with the Italian culture and literary connections between Russia and Italy. Children have already got a letter sent by SimbirChit from Roma. We will tell about this work in details as it moves forward.

We would like to establish such kind of cooperation also with school libraries of Turkey.

SimbirChit is a brand of the Ulyanovsk region. It should be promoted and advertised widely. Children like this nice creature with the book in its hands very much, and they recognize it on all maps. They write poems and songs about it, they compose fairy-tales, paint, mould out of plasticine, and sew. They are interested in reading, playing, and travelling with it. Have a nice way, SimbirChit!