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Enhancing Reading Skills in an Academic Library: A Case Study of a Reading Group

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Abstract: The paper investigated how Reading Groups in Academic Libraries can contribute to increasing library users' interaction with literature and improving language skills. A case study was conducted with the inclusion of creative writing exercises in a reading group. This initiative took place during the winter semester of the 2022-2023 academic year and involved Library Science students at a Greek University. The focus of the reading community was Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*, targeting 12 students who had completed the Literature course of the 5th semester and volunteered to participate. The meetings were conducted within the Academic Library environment, aiming to familiarise participants with significant works of World Literature. Educational methodologies were employed based on reader-response theories, particularly Rosenblatt's Transactional Model, to underscore the creative engagement inherent in contemporary readers' interpretation of literary texts. After the conclusion of the program, students were asked to share their thoughts and experiences through open-ended questionnaires. The purpose was to evaluate how participation in reading groups at the library helped improve their language and reading skills, as well as sparked a deeper interest in exploring classic literature further. It was found that the reading group in Academic Libraries played a significant role in cultivating reading and language skills to students, as well as changing their attitudes towards literature. This paper filled a notable gap in the literature, particularly within the Greek context,

regarding the role of reading groups in Academic Libraries as a means of bolstering students' reading capabilities.

Keywords: academic libraries, reading groups, reading skills, novel of the absurd

Introduction

Reading Groups for Adult Readers

Reading groups within academic libraries are designed not only for young adults (18–24) but also for adult participants, operating under the principles of Adult Education. While age was an important factor in categorising participants, it was not the sole factor that could determine the design of these educational gatherings. Moderators must consider various elements of participants' personalities and readiness to engage with literature in order to ensure effective sessions (Tyler, 2014).

The composition of reading groups often encompasses a diverse range of ages, particularly in settings like academic libraries, where student communities may include both young adults and individuals meeting the standard adulthood criterion of 25 years (Kokkos, 2005). This mix contributes to a rich tapestry of perspectives, enriching discussions and creative expressions surrounding literary texts.

Regardless of their age category, adults view literature as a valuable educational tool, both within formal academic settings and throughout their lifelong learning journey. Reading initiatives aim to foster not only aesthetic appreciation but also the reevaluation of preconceived notions about art and self identity (Kokkos, 2005; Prokou, 2004). Adult Education, as a framework for lifelong learning, aims at both social integration and the cultivation of cognitive and linguistic skills (Virvidaki, 2023).

The reasons why adults participate in reading groups are similar to those found in other educational settings, such as wanting to improve their skills, exploring their favorite genres, or connecting with others who share their love of literature (Grenier et al., 2022). Facilitators have to recognise that adult participants bring a wealth of lived experiences to discussions, which can enrich the dialogue and foster the self-directed learning. They should also remain mindful of the potential influence of stereotypical perceptions of literature on adult participants (Kokkos, 2005).

Creating tailored reading responses that cater to the specific attributes of adult learners can capitalise on their readiness to engage with the material, leading to an enriching and analytical learning journey. Flexibility and continuous adjustments are often necessary to ensure meaningful interaction, especially considering the psychotherapeutic dimension of literature for adult readers (Smith & Galbraith, 2011).

In essence, adult engagement with literature within the context of reading groups offers not only mental relaxation but also a creative outlet for expression, contributing to personal growth and critical thinking. As academic libraries strive to cater for diverse audiences, the understanding of the unique characteristics and motives of adult participants is paramount in fostering a vibrant and enriching reading culture within the community (Mezirow, 1997). Recognising the declining interest in literature among younger adults and encounter difficulties in critical text processing and interpretive approaches to literary works, the study sought to underscore the importance of cultivating a more engaging reading environment for literature. This environment aims to encourage reading and enhance linguistic expression among younger adults who may struggle with literary analysis and interpretation.

Problem Statement

In this context, the current paper aimed to address a significant gap in the existing literature, particularly within the Greek context, concerning the role of reading groups in Academic Libraries. The article highlighted how the involvement in these groups can enhance students' reading and language abilities, while also introducing them to timeless pieces of literature (Jansen, 2018; Vaitsakis, 2022). While the importance of School and Children's Libraries in developing reading habits in young readers has been emphasised (Debrenlieva-Koutsouki, 2018; Smith, 2016), it is still important to investigate how reading groups within Academic Libraries can improve the connection of young adult students with literature by enhancing their reading abilities.

Research Aim and Research Questions

Given these considerations, the research questions were formulated as follows:

- a. How does the Academic Library align with the Curriculum of the educational communities it serves?
- b. What theoretical principles should guide the design of reading groups when implemented in an Academic Library to enhance participants' reading skills and deepen their appreciation for classic literature?
- c. What methods and techniques do participants themselves consider, based on the case study, to more effectively strengthen their motivation for reading and participating in similar processes?
- d. To what extent do participants consider that cultivating interpretive skills in reading literature has an overall positive impact on academic performance?

As previously mentioned, the examination of the positive outcomes of reading groups was based on a case study conducted among Library Science students during the winter semester of 2022–2023. The participation in the activity was optional and revolved around studying Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. The session lasted for a total of 8 teaching hours and was designed for a group of 12 individuals, which included both young adults and adults.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework draws on various reading theories concerning the interplay between reader and literary text, the roles and features of academic libraries, and the distinct traits of adult readers and learners.

At its core, the examination of reading theories emphasised a departure from text-centered interpretations towards recognising the active engagement of the reader in dialogue with literary works (Frydaki & Papageorgakis, 2022). This paradigm shift, initiated notably by Barthes (1967) in *The death of the author*, challenges the primacy of the author while highlighting the text's capacity for evolving interpretations. Prior theories such as New Criticism, Constructivism, and Semiotics pinpointed the role of conventions in meaning-making but did not grant readers agency in shaping the aesthetic coherence of a work. The groundwork for acknowledging the reader's contribution to meaning-making was laid by theorists from the Constance School and proponents of American reading theories (Hawthorn, 2012; Tziovas, 2014).

The exploration of how literary language can give rise to numerous interpretations is examined, accentuating the reader's creative agency within literary theory through three principal frameworks:

the theory or aesthetics of reception (see H.R. Jauss), the theory of aesthetic response (see W. Iser) and reader-response criticism, representing the American perspective on reader engagement. Both Jauss and Iser draw upon Hermeneutics and Phenomenology in crafting their theoretical frameworks. They assert that readers, embedded in the tradition of literary texts, actively construct meaning through interpretation, thus instilling the text with aesthetic significance (Tziovas, 2014). Scholars influenced by Gadamer's (2001) hermeneutic philosophy emphasise the co-production of meaning by reader and text, while acknowledging the influence of cultural contexts on interpretation (Frydaki, 2009).

Jauss (1988) argues that every interpretation of a text is influenced by past literary encounters, placing the contemporary reader within a wider cultural context. Similarly, Iser (1991) contends that readers act as co-creators of the text by reconstructing it in their consciousness, thereby restoring its aesthetic unity through interpretation. As the reader and text collaborate in a mutual effort of interpretation, the act of interpretation becomes an experiential journey necessitating both intellectual and emotional investment. Iser (ibid) characterises the reader's engagement with the text as an intellectual adventure contributing to the aesthetic realisation of the work.

While reading groups have historical roots in the literary salons of the 17th and 18th centuries during the Enlightenment (Long, 2003), Fish's (2021) concept of the interpretive community holds particular significance for contemporary reading groups. Collective reading, characterised by dialectical engagement with literary discourse and the exchange of perspectives among readers, serves as the primary channel for meaning-making. Texts gain significance, as consensus and/or disagreement within the interpretive community give rise to nuanced interpretations (Edmunds & Bauserman, 2006; Fajardo, 2010). Fish's (2021) framework allows for contextualising individual viewpoints within the dynamics of the group, echoing Bleich's (1978) assertion that the community assesses the value of interpretations, prioritising the social dimension of the reading experience. These perspectives on the social dynamics of interpretation underscore the subjectivity of experience and challenge the coherence posited by structuralism.

Rosenblatt (1994) similarly positions the reader as the primary mediator of a work's aesthetic coherence. Central to her Transactional theory is the notion of reciprocal interaction between text and reader, where the reader leverages their cognitive and social repertoire to hermeneutically interpret the textual constructs (Rosenblatt, 1995). Every reading experience is distinct, as people may have varied reactions each time they encounter the same text (ibid). Transactional theory stresses the social dimension of reading, as readers' interpretations undergo scrutiny within the context of the reading community's discussions, testing their efficacy in the transactional encounter with the text. Through dialogic engagement, Transactional theory demonstrates how participants in a reading group can develop their initial reactions and develop a deeper understanding of the text's artistic qualities, ultimately enriching the overall reading experience (ibid). Consequently, the reading approach outlined below aligns with the foundational tenets of the Transactional Model. The process encompasses four stages: a) preparing the reading community for engaging with the target text, b) initial reading response, c) refinement of reading response and d) expression of responses. These principles also resonate with Dewey's (1934) advocacy for the enriching impact of human interaction with art, encapsulating the utilisation of participants' social experiences during reading -a notion congruent with both reading theories and principles of Adult Education (Diestler, 2012; Virvidaki, 2023).

In this context, academic libraries emerge as the most conducive educational communities to facilitate such reading processes, provided they prioritise both individual and collective reading spaces. An academic library is intricately linked with an educational community, aiming to support the educational, learning, and research endeavours of students, faculty, and staff within a university setting.

These libraries have a crucial role in providing access to a wide range of scholarly resources, books, journals, databases, multimedia, and other academic publications. The evolving landscape of technology demonstrates how imperative it is for libraries to supplement traditional roles with new media and explore innovative avenues to fulfill their mission (Giannakopoulos et al., 2014).

Supported by proficient staff equipped to aid users in research and navigate library resources, academic libraries have modern technological infrastructure. They often engage in interlibrary loan programs, facilitating digital access to a substantial portion of their collections (Durant & Horava, 2015). Given that academic libraries serve as foundational pillars in the learning journey and professional development of future professionals across disciplines, it is evident that access to and utilisation of available resources directly correlate with a range of literacies (e.g., critical, informational) and fundamental skills. As a result, students must be able to adjust to the unique demands of each subject and effectively use a wide range of concepts and terms in their studies. Mastering complex logical patterns and methodological tools requires developing strong reflective reading skills, encompassing critical information processing and alternative thinking processes (Giannakopoulos et al., 2012), thereby fostering the exploration of original solutions to complex problems (Vodă et al., 2012).

Beyond the specific realm of study, the academic setting dictates the reinforcement of students' self-regulation and the cultivation of essential language skills to comprehend, analyze, and interpret sources relevant to their studies. Proficiency in recognising diverse literary genres and understanding works within their communicative context emerges as a crucial skill-set, dependent on the academic discipline (Oatley, 2016). Consequently, the academic library, serves as the quintessential information hub offering access to a variety of texts and resources and an environment for nurturing skills essential to transform students into sharp and imaginative readers capable of overcoming intellectual difficulties (Durant & Horava, 2015).

Focusing on literary works as the paramount avenue for experiencing the pleasure of reading, the creative and critical reader, who engages in a dialogue with the text while acknowledging their role in shaping its meaning, undergoes a transformative journey through the act of reading. Recognising that reading and the production of scholarly discourse are inseparable from language skills and reading proficiency, the educational setting of reading groups within Academic Libraries emerges as a valuable tool for nurturing students' sensitivity to language creativity and the intricate interplay between cognitive and language proficiencies (Morley, 2009; Stawarska, 2022).

Grounded in the principles of social interaction and the recreational aspect of creative reading and writing within such groups, with the essential skills and knowledge needed to excel in their academic pursuits (Peplow et al., 2015). Nonetheless, as reading sensitivity and the ability to discern and engage with various textual genres constitute prerequisites for the critical and creative handling of information and the refinement of academic discourse skills, these reading groups can prove beneficial for students of any domain (Yuan et al., 2022).

Academic libraries and the reading activities are essential in cultivating research skills by providing opportunities to conduct thorough research using various resources and databases (Shrestha et al., 2008). The exposure to a diverse array of literary genres reinforces students' reading competencies and fosters their aesthetic sensibilities, particularly concerning literary discourse, while also fostering the development of social and analytical skills in literature and written communication in general (Martin-Chang et al., 2021; Smith & Galbraith, 2011). Simultaneously, students develop the skills to distinguish intellectual and artistic works that accurately represent the beliefs and cultural influences

of their time periods, thus enhancing their historical consciousness and providing experiential insight into the sociopolitical and aesthetic dimensions of cultural history (Gauder et al., 2007).

Materials and Methods

The exploration of the positive outcomes associated with reading groups rooted in a case study involving Library Science students during the fall semester of 2022–2023. This initiative centered around Kafka's *Metamorphosis* and spanned over eight hours (four sessions). The participants comprised 12 students, belonging to both young adult and adult categories who participated voluntarily. The main goal was to shed light on how reading groups interact with classical literature. Specifically, the aim was to acquaint participating students with the impact of Kafka's work on the literary and broader cultural landscape of the Western world. Through this examination, the aim was to uncover insights into the efficacy of reading groups in enriching participants' understanding and appreciation of seminal literary texts (Goldberg & Barry, 2012).

The objectives of the workshop were to: a) to understand in practice how a reading community is organised, b) to become familiar with the basic features of Kafka's prose and, more generally, of works from the literary canon in reading activities, c) to understand how the access to archival material and resources offered by an academic library can enhance the reading skills of the participants, d) to further cultivate their language and interpretation skills through creative activities.

As previously stated, the educational approach was a blend of various methods and is rooted in the Transactional Model, collapsing the four phases into three and implementing creative activities in all three phases, following the structure: a) preparation and initial response, b) refinement of response and c) reflecting and extending the response.

An interpretive dialogue was combined with the cooperative learning and creative writing activities (Sawyer, 2007). Such a scheme did not exclude the individual reading; on the contrary, it used it as a fundamental aspect of dialogue about works and cultural phenomena. The participants' interpretations were formed on the basis of creative activities that delved into the content, form, and cultural atmosphere of the time. Due to the involvement of the academic library, the project's approach utilised a variety of sources and opened up to issues that went beyond the normal process of the reading community. However, it remained a voluntary and recreational process that respected the text it mediated and presupposed the participation of adult students.

An introduction to Kafka's writing and the selection of *Metamorphosis*

Widely recognised, Franz Kafka (1883-1924) was a German-speaking Czech prose writer (novelist and short story writer) and is regarded as one of the most significant literary figures of the 20th century. Born in Prague, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Kafka came from a German-speaking, middle-class Ashkenazi Jewish family. Their language of communication was a variant of German infused with Hebrew words and expressions, while they used the Hebrew script for writing. Therefore, the chosen text enabled the instructor to discuss issues of linguistic power dynamics and the representation of minority voices in relation to an author's efforts to make his work more accessible (Gilman, 1995). Additionally, it facilitated an engaging dialogue about the nuances of literary translation as a channel for aesthetic trends and innovations across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Notably, Rothkirchen (2005) refers to Kafka as the 'symbolic figure of his time', given the profound impact of his writing on numerous literary phenomena of the 20th and 21st centuries.

Kafka remained relatively unknown during his lifetime, with his work gaining recognition after the World War II. He left none of his novels completed and even destroyed a substantial portion of his writings while residing in Berlin. In his formative years as a writer, he was influenced by Von Kleist, whom he regarded as family. Kafka entrusted his work to his friend Max Brod with explicit instructions for its destruction after his death. However, Brod chose to defy Kafka and opted to publish his works. Additionally, he undertook the task of completing several of Kafka's unfinished works for publication.

Most of Kafka's literary output is associated with the experimental modernist genre and allegory. Deleuze and Guattari (1998) argue that Kafka's work is more deliberate and subversive than initially perceived, as it focuses on people's inclination to invent problems. The author Milan Kundera suggests that Kafka's surreal humor may represent an inversion of Dostoyevsky's character portrayal. Kakutani (1988) writes that Kafka's letters exhibit characteristics akin to his fiction. The significant use of the mythical element, expressed through comedy and aphorism by Kafka, positions him as a progenitor of the absurd novel. Indeed, Kafka's traits are discernible in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*, the works of Eugène Ionesco, and Albert Camus *The stranger* (Beckett, 1994; Camus, 1989).

The plot of *Metamorphosis* revolves around a man named Gregor Samsa, who awakens one morning to discover his body has metamorphosed into the form of a beetle. This absurd occurrence unfolds with startling realism. Gregor's father, mother, and younger sister comprise the rest of the Samsa family. The structural axes of semantic relations utilised in designing the interpretative approach included: a) the concept of power, which renders its influence direct and visible, b) the internal hierarchy within the authoritative mechanism: the methods of controlling and organising authoritative structures, c) the emergence of doubt and the victimisation of the oppressed and d) the concept of internal decay and coercion, symbolising the subject's entanglement in a situation.

Discussions at the sessions centered around activities that creatively elucidate how Gregor's transformation represents a profound sense of marginalisation, both within his own family and socially. Thus, it explores how the human condition is experienced by Gregor only when he dares to confront those accountable for his condition. This finding reflected the contradiction of the enduring presence of a central subjective-human core within Gregor's inner self (human Gregor versus insect Gregor) (Kavanagh, 1972).

The design thus consolidated various individual issues stemming from the reading of *Metamorphosis*. This is why it was selected as a key resource for introducing Kafka's writing, serving as a succinct guide that allowed for both a basic understanding and a more in-depth analysis through group discussions, honing in on the central themes of Kafka's literature. Simultaneously, the interpretive approach was structured based on principles of Adult Education, prioritising the self-regulation, and activating participants' expectations, motivations, and reading competencies, implementing activities that emphasise reflective processes (Diestler, 2012) and align with the transformative learning model.

Structural Design of the Sessions

The successful implementation of a reading activity heavily depends on how the material is organised for each meeting. This entails adhering to logical criteria respecting the flow of the text, considering the readiness and reading time of adult participants, and enabling multifocal and creative exploration of each unit.

Based on the above, the main parameters considered in forming the individual structural units for each session were as follows:

- The interpretation of literary techniques and their functionality, without strictly adhering to formalistic evaluation.
- The discussion of significant themes in the novel, such as the absurdity of life and the challenge of finding meaning in the modern world.
- The application of a psychoanalytical perspective, exploring potential interpretations of Gregor's transformation as an expression of psychic traumas and needs.
- Sociological perspective with the analysis of how the work satirically reflects societal norms in Western cultures.
- The creative exploration of character presentation and development techniques, particularly regarding Gregor.
- Comparative poetics highlighting individual convergences and divergences from Kafka's later works, such as *The Trial* and *The Castle*, to encourage further exploration of Kafka's writing.

It is evident that reading *Metamorphosis* and Kafka's works in general constitutes an intriguing and challenging process, rendering it an excellent text for systematic and creative engagement within a library reading group setting. Building upon the tripartite model of approach following educational theories and contemporary literary criticism selected activities implemented were presented by category and phase. The following activities exemplify typical experiences customised to suit the group's preferences.

A. Text-centered approach:

The participants were encouraged to discuss passages both in their groups and in plenary, providing interpretative commentary on individual sections in relation to the entire text and the themes revealed through their analysis. This method utilised various translations to highlight the importance of translating literature between languages and the transformative power of translation as a means of artistic reinterpretation.

Activity 1 (Phase I)

What indirect information does the work provide about the character's professional and personal life? Refer to phrases and words that provide evidence.

Activity 2 (Phase II)

How does Gregor's observation that no one decides to enter his room contribute to the overall depiction of the Kafkaesque world?

Activity 3 (Phase III)

Which features of absurd fiction are evident in Gregor's fading connections to his previous life?

B. Critical questions regarding Kafka's symbols and their semantic function:

This section focused on identifying patterns in content and form crucial for understanding Kafka's work, the textual genre, and its relationship to intellectual and social events of the period.

Activity 1 (Phase I)

How does the narrator's treatment of the character, evident in the descriptions and rendering of his thoughts, reflect the social reality of the period in which the novel was written?

Activity 2 (Phase II)

Comment on the attorney's departure from the family home, drawing on Politi's (1999) perspective that Gregor's metamorphosis echoes the paradox of a central human core persisting within Gregor-insect's interiority.

Activity 3 (Phase II)

Explain why Gregor's family, including his mother, cannot bear to look at him, while the maid does not exhibit a similar reaction. Refer to Jung's (1968) view on the symbolic function of the shadow and its manifestation in literary works.

C. Comparative examination and intertextual function:

This section involved the examination of the passages and patterns alongside other works to identify similarities and differences, using archival material in order to understand Kafka's texts.

Activity 1 (Phase I)

Discuss the role of the attorney in the novel and the characteristics he shares with the institutions depicted in Kafka's *The Trial*.

Activity 2 (Phase II)

Compare the description of the father's old uniform in *Metamorphosis* with the manager's communication protocols in *The Castle*, noting similarities regarding authority in Kafka's works.

Activity 3 (Phase III)

Compare the endings of *Metamorphosis* and *The Trial* highlighting both similarities and differences.

D. Simulations, Role-Playing Games, and Character Interviews.

Diary entries from the perspective of characters, supplemented with archival materials (such as photographs, diaries, and analyses) accessible through the academic library. The groups were tasked with discussing situations arising within the Samsa family while assuming the roles of family members. These activities provided a platform for scenes that are typically overlooked in the text, with the goal of enhancing comprehension of the characters' relationships and interactions.

Activity 1 (Phase II)

Imagine Samsa as a character in contemporary society. Assume you encounter him in his manager's office as his transformation begins and he receives a reprimand for his performance, with implications of suspicion for misconduct. Decide how you would present the two characters. Decide how the director will deliver their lines and what dialogue the protagonist will have.

Activity 2 (Phase II)

Engage in collaborative writing in groups of three. Participate in a family council of the Samsas, assuming the role of one of the characters. Each group member collectively decides how to convey the thoughts and approach of a character and present them in the preferred order.

Activity 3 (Phase III)

As a team, we examined the possible impacts on the organization's culture if Kafka's protagonist were to experience a more positive resolution. Then, assumed the role of the parents and decided how would they react toward the two children.

E. Image Commentary – Inter-artistic Dialogue.

Utilising the book cover art, comics, films, and caricatures influenced by the particular piece and the Kafkaesque world as a whole, groups observed the dynamic influence Kafka had on the 20th and 21st centuries.

Activity 1 (Phase I)

Observe the book-covers of different editions and explain how they influence the readers' perception of the book (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Books Covers



Source: Kafka (1961; 2008; 2012).

Activity 2 (Phase II)

Comment on Gregor Samsa's self-awareness. In your opinion, is he a hero or an anti-hero, and why?

Activity 3 (Phase III).

a. What elements of Kafka's fiction does Orson Welles utilize in the specific cinematic scene from *The trial* (Figure 2)?

Figure 2

Specific Cinematic Scene from Kafka's The trial



Source: Kafka (1961).

F. Creative Writing reconstructing scenes, transferring characters or situations to another fictional environment, and employing freer processes of creative writing that reflect fundamental elements of Kafka's writing.

Activity 1 (Phase I)

Begin the first two paragraphs of your own story belonging to one of the following genres: fantasy, absurd, psychological.

Activity 2 (Phase II)

The character from Kafka, overwhelmed by what is happening, decides to write a short poem to express his emotions. Become the poetic voice of the character. Your expression can be satirical, further deconstructing the character, or you can convey his mental state and tragedy with your own words.

Activity 3 (Phase III)

Narrate a series of events and character reactions that will occur in the plot, choosing to present the young protagonist deliberately (or in the heat of the moment) biting one of the family members.

G. Production of a short essay:

Optional activity

Using optional relevant literature, you can write and post in the MS Teams group created for the workshop a short essay (about 800–1500 words) analysing your own approach to how Kafka's work illuminates unseen aspects regarding the influence of the parent-child relationship on one's later life. You can work individually or in groups.

Results and Discussion

Although the results of qualitative research cannot be generalisable the participants' answers allowed for interesting assumptions. Participants offered insights on what they considered to be successful and why, especially in relation to: a) stimulating their creativity, interests, and fostering social interaction within both smaller group settings and larger plenary sessions within the Academic Library environment. Based on the responses collected from a brief open-ended questionnaire at the end of the project, the 12 participants stated that the interpretive approach within the context of a reading group offered them a new dimension to experiencing literary text. 9 out of 12 noted that reading in this way overall enhanced their language skills beyond literature. Additionally, 10 noted that the reading group experience was very interesting and could be an important means for libraries to strengthen readers'

attitude towards literature. 8 out of 12 pointed out that it significantly improved their attitude towards reading Classical Literature as readers and as students of the specific Department.

A student emphasised: "Some texts seem to require being read over and over again. They say new things to the reader [...] I was impressed by Kafka's writing and his world [...]." Another student stated: "I had not imagined how rich an approach to a literary text can be. [...] I had the opportunity not only to think about my own opinion of the text and the issues it raises but also to hear the thoughts and attitudes of others [...] It opened up new horizons for my relationship with literature as a library science student." Especially regarding the relationship of reading communities and the role of libraries, as well as librarians, a student mentioned: "I think it's another dimension to the profession of a librarian [...] with the appropriate knowledge and study [...] it will bring people to the library." 3 out of 12 participants felt that the creative reading processes enhanced their writing inclinations. A student noted: "I felt that I gained a lot from the process [...] a lot about literature, about writing [...] about life [...]."

Thus, it appears that there is a correlation between implementing reader-centered approaches and creative writing methods and increased interest in literature, as well as the development of cognitive and linguistic skills in participants. This suggests a potential link between reading groups in school and children's libraries and academic libraries (Debrenlieva-Koutsouki, 2018; Vaitsakis, 2022). Although there is a lack of studies that explore the impact of literary reading in academic libraries on the academic performance of participants, it seems that there is some correlation with results of relevant studies regarding reading groups in school classrooms and libraries (Malafantis, 2018; Papadatos, 2009). The participation in processes that provide various cultural stimuli and enhance their inclinations and reading interests tends to develop cognitive and creative skills that are useful both in their academic life and in other areas of their lives (Kiciman et al., 2019; Runco, 2007). Collaborative learning and further utilisation of library resources develop their aesthetic education and cultivate a positive attitude towards both knowledge and reading as well as towards the book as a tangible object (Yan & Cai, 2022).

This reading approach exemplifies how incorporating reading activities in the academic library can enhance the educational goals of University courses. Therefore, without undermining the free, open and entertaining nature of the creative reading and writing sought by such approaches, it is feasible to enhance the connection with Literary Theory and Criticism. Taking into account the reading experiences and the increased motivation of the participants for deepening in the text and focusing more on the relationship with the broader cultural context of the novel, the methods and techniques chosen involved more dynamically the concepts of academic research, information literacy, and critical management of terms and concepts in literary and library studies. Recognising the possibilities offered by the implementation of reading activities within the space of the academic library, the sessions aimed not only at enjoying the text but also at the indirect and direct correlation of literary production with the political and social atmosphere of a period (Camargo-Rojas, 2023).

At the same time, the specific activities, which were based on the collective discussion of the participants, seemed to have met the initial expectations, had a dual goal that defined the framework of the approach's design and implementation. It was not just a project organising a reading community with the aim to illuminate the value and aesthetic beauty of works of the literary canon to library science students, but also a workshop based on the principles of experiential learning, where participants could observe in practice how to organise such activities in a library and reflect on them, in relation to the educational objectives. In simpler terms, it became a study on the connection between bibliophilia and the objectives of modern libraries through a meta-analysis approach.

Conclusions

Therefore, it can be argued that through the project's implementation, it is evident which skills librarians should develop within an interdisciplinary framework to effectively evaluate literary discourse in their field. On the other hand, it was possible for the research to receive useful data that could be used to improve the educational process in real-time, before the completion of the activity and the final evaluation by the students but also after the end of the workshop in order to improve future implementations.

In summary, organising reading groups in academic libraries is not just a way for participants to love literature, but to reassess the motives that initially lead them to study and produce new knowledge. The discourse of literature through dialectical reading is much more than discussing a literary work. It is a form of self-reflection and a means of more substantial social integration into the broader academic community - a demanding learning environment, based on the skills it requires from its members.

Suggestions for Future Research

Therefore, further investigation of the relation between reading groups and academic performance, as well as reading attitudes through the design and implementation of reading groups, is seen as essential. More research data are specifically needed concerning the Academic Libraries of Greek universities. Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are required to further investigate the attitudes of both students and academic staff regarding: a) the impact of reading groups on the development of reading habits, and b) the correlation between students' participation in reading communities and the improvement of their academic performance, especially in courses related to literary studies. Additionally, it is advisable for similar studies to be conducted on a sample population of librarians working in Academic Libraries regarding the effectiveness of reading groups in promoting library collections and attracting members of the educational community to visit the library more often.

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