Practical application of qualitative methods in libraries with special demonstration of oral history

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Background and objectives
The purpose of the workshop is to provide the participants with practical basics of qualitative research methods. The objectives are to: (a) summarize the principles of qualitative methods so that participants can develop proficiency on their own and (b) explain the concept of oral history, as an important qualitative methods application, showing its possibilities in librarianship with examples. The results of qualitative methods can be used, among others, to: evaluate the work and services of libraries, describe user behavior, gain insight into expectations of a community, and demonstrate the contribution of libraries as social capital. The principles and various approaches to qualitative research are summarized. Detailed descriptions of two methods with numerous examples are shown. The first method is oral history - a planned, prepared and carefully designed and conducted interview of individuals about an event in time past in which they actively participated in or had witnessed. The second method is the application of grounded theory - a systematic methodology in the social sciences involving the discovery of theory through the analysis of data. In practice, grounded theory is used for analysis of oral history interviews by developing codes about the content of utterances and then coding the utterances in each interview. The first method concentrates on getting data and the second on analyzing them. Numerous examples are provided from a study whose purpose was to investigate the activity and life of libraries, librarians and users in a number of cities that were under siege during the war in Croatia from 1991 to 1995 (Šapro-Ficović, M. (2012)). The study involved lengthy interviews with 50 librarians and 17 library users from ten cities that were under siege and where libraries were the only cultural institutions that fully functioned in their communities during those times and under war conditions. They enabled the records of oral history through the recollections of events, library services and library use under siege. One of the major outcomes of these qualitative methods are statements with examples of the value of libraries. Through the testimony of librarians and users, and through examples of continuous service delivery under difficult conditions, libraries have proven their value in and to the community.

Target audience
Researchers, LIS students, library professionals.

Learning objectives
After the workshop, participants should be able to: define the basic principles of qualitative methodology, aimed at libraries and users; begin to develop the application of internationally accepted methods of oral history to collect data from users and librarians about the work and the value of libraries; begin to develop a broad application of the established method of grounded theory for analyzing oral history data; evaluate the work and contribution of libraries in towns under siege during the war in Croatia; contribute information and studies about the value of libraries.

Duration
2,5 hours.

Keywords: qualitative methods, oral history, grounded theory, values of libraries, libraries in war

Curriculum Vitae
Position: Senior Librarian in Scientific and Public Libraries in Dubrovnik; Head of Department for Regional Public and School Libraries, 2001 to date.


Conferences, publications: Member of organizing committees of regional and international conferences 1999 till present. Among them annual international conference Libraries in the Digital Age (LIDA) (Dubrovnik and Zadar, Croatia); Conceptions of Library and Information Science 3 (COLIS 3) (Dubrovnik, 1999); 6th Roundtable on Free Access to Information of Croatian Library Association and FAIFE anti corruption workshop (Zagreb, 2006). Participated in many other projects, conferences and seminars. Gave lectures and published articles related to special fields of interest: use and users of public libraries; free access to information; professional values and ethics; access and preservation of valuable library holdings; digital libraries and library networks. Among others, presented papers at Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries International Conference (QQML2013), Rome, Italy, June 2013 and the Oral History Association Annual Meeting, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, USA, October, 2013.