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Прегледни рад  
УДК 028.8-056.262:615.85(470)  
<https://doi.org/10.18485/bibliotekar.2021.63.2.4>

## **BOOK AND LIBRARY IN THE LIFE OF THE BLIND**

**Summary:** The article is devoted to the bibliotherapy treatment, especially of disabled persons on the example of the activity of the Tver Regional Special Library for the Blind named after M. I. Suvorov. Some methods of bibliotherapy during pandemic are presented.

**Keywords:** bibliotherapy, special library, tiflocommentation, the Tver Regional Special Library for the Blind “M. I. Suvorov”, RLA Section, libraries for disabled.

A modern man experiences extremely high psychological and informational loads associated with the adverse effects of the environment, constantly increasing production rates, and an avalanche-like increase in the volume of information. Readers are turning to the book in order to solve their psychological problems, looking for support and help from librarians.

The inherent human need to communicate with the beautiful things is exceptionally high. Literary works have a strong influence on the spiritual world of a person and his physical condition. The read word can cause a variety of emotions: grief and sadness, happiness and joy. Watching a person reading, by his facial expressions, you can almost accurately determine what exactly he is reading: joyful, cheerful or sad.

Bibliotherapy (treatment by reading) is currently attracting more and more attention of scientists and practitioners seeking to maximize the “therapeutic” possibilities of the book. Reorientation to a bibliotherapeutic direction that meets the needs of readers will increase the prestige of the library as a social institution that can help a person correct the negative consequences of social and personal changes. Today it is advisable to talk about bibliotherapy as a treatment by all library means not only of an individual, but also of society as a whole.

Bibliotherapy received scientific justification only at the beginning of the 20th century. The first mention of the term itself dates back to 1916, since

then hundreds of publications of both theoretical and practical nature have appeared. Conferences and symposiums on bibliotherapy have been held in several countries, associations of bibliotherapists have been established. At many medical conferences, bibliotherapy is highlighted as an important part of traditional medicine.<sup>1</sup>

In Russia bibliotherapy did not immediately become widespread. The leading role in substantiating the methods of bibliotherapy was played by the works of N. A. Rubakin, his bibliopsychological theory. In his work "Among Books" he wrote: "Three great forces are contained in the book – knowledge, understanding, mood."<sup>2</sup>

The issues of bibliotherapy in different periods were covered by such authors as Yu. N. Drescher, O. L. Kabachek, I. N. Kazarinova, B. S. Kreidenko, B. A. Simonov, R. Skaller. A number of articles in periodicals are devoted to the analysis of the problems of bibliotherapy: in the journals "Children's Literature", "Library Science", "Library". Differing in particulars, experts are united in the fact that bibliotherapy (treatment by reading) is at the junction of such sciences as psychology, medicine and library science. In medical terms, it is a part of psychotherapy, i.e. the systematic use of mental influence for therapeutic purposes. In library science bibliotherapy is considered as one of the directions of the pedagogy of reading. The theory of bibliotherapy is based on several aspects: the impact of the written word on the psychophysical state of a person; the theory of reading as a type of communication activity through which a person obtains knowledge to correct behavior, attitudes, etc.<sup>3</sup>

As the phenomenon "bibliotherapy" is considered a part of psychotherapy, which uses literature (non-fiction or classic worldwide known novels and poetry, etc.) as methods of word therapy, many special libraries have begun to use this form of readers servicing. Due to special bibliotherapy effect of self-identification with book heroes (calmness, satisfaction, activity improvement) a person can solve his own problems, change his attitude and mood, find ways out, begin lifelong education and socialization in the world of healthy people.

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<sup>1</sup> Юлия Николаевна Дрешер, „Исторические предпосылки и теоретико-методологические основы библиотерапевтических исследований”, *Библиотечное дело – 2000: проблемы формирования открытого информационного общества. Ч. 1.* (Моск. гос. ун-т культуры и искусств, 2000), 17–19.

<sup>2</sup> Юлия Петровна Мелентьева, *Чтение, читатель, библиотека в изменяющемся мире*, Москва: Наука, 2007, 355.

<sup>3</sup> Владимир Сергеевич Крейденко, „Библиотерапия: Возможности использования в общедоступных библиотеках”, *Современное библиотечное информационное образование*, 2 (1997): 32–51.

And now a few words about the libraries for disabled (the blind). Modern scientists treat disabled people as a complicated biological, social and psychological category. Anna Adler (Anna Alexandrovna Adler was born on February 2, 1856. Under the guidance of typhlopedagogue Alexander Skrebitsky, she mastered the Braille system and introduced the study of relief-dot writing into the curriculum of the Moscow school for blind children) spoke about the fact that a book is a link which can connect the blind and a sighted person<sup>4</sup>.

The blind had their own writing system with a gap of several thousand years after the invention of writing for the sighted, and printing for the blind was already three centuries behind, and this is quite natural, since it is during this historical period that a corresponding social order arises – the system of education for the blind is developing.

What is the name of the method when people “read with their fingers”? In ancient times, there was a legend that a man had eyes on his fingertips. Maybe that’s why our hands are still literally sighted – they see what is happening in the body, feel the energy flows in it. Even those who are deprived of sight “look” at this world with their hands. They feel the object with their fingertips and can describe it for themselves based on these sensations. Books for blind people are also designed for finger reading. According to the sensations of the hand, some of them can even tell what color an object is, based on whether it radiates heat or cold.

Publishing a book printed in Braille is a very expensive and time-consuming process. The density of information in such books is very low, i.e. a huge space is needed for their storage. It is difficult to assemble a library of Braille books at home. Partially, the problem of the lack of literature in an accessible form for the blind was solved by the so called “talking book” (1934 in the USA and 1958 in the USSR). This is a book recorded by an actor on a magnetic tape. It was necessary to “read” it on a special typhloreorder with a reduced speed of pulling the tape. Publishing a “talking book” is cheaper and easier compared to publishing a Braille book. In addition, it is much more compact.<sup>5</sup>

However, along with the advantages of a “talking book” there are also disadvantages. It is inconvenient to use a “talking book” as a textbook, only linear navigation is feasible in it, i.e. it is impossible to immediately open the

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<sup>4</sup> <https://rosbs.ru/uploads/documents/2021.pdf> (accessed October 7, 2021).

<sup>5</sup> В. М. Суворова, „Специализированные документы в фондах библиотек для слепых”. Румянцевские чтения Часть 3: материалы междунар. науч.- практ. конф. Российской гос. 6-ки (24–25 апр. 2018), сост. Е. А. Иванова (Москва: Пашков дом, 2018), 117–119.

desired page by looking at the content, but it is necessary to listen to the entire book, looking for the desired fragment in it.

Currently, special libraries for the blind have accumulated a large fund of Braille and “talking” books, but, unfortunately, this is only a very small part of the abundance of information that can be used with the help of vision. There is another problem: in Braille literature, graphic information is practically absent in art books, in many textbooks, such as geography, literature, history, etc., and in textbooks on mathematics and physics, due to the established practice of Braille book publishers, drawings are present either in a separate book or at the end of the book. And some drawings and drawings even in these textbooks are omitted because of the complexity of their reproduction.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, a special library is a unique cultural institution with the staff of special quality, skills and psychological education, book depository of documents in relief-dot font, books recorded on magnetic tape, publications printed in enlarged font, information on electronic media. The special library carries out the development of equal members of society, introducing them to the cultural potential of the country.

The Tver Regional Special Library (hereinafter referred to as the Library) for the Blind named after Mikhail Ivanovich Suvorov, the Tver poet, Honored Teacher of Russia, who headed the School for the blind and visually impaired in Kalinin (now Tver) for forty years, has for many years preserved the cultural heritage and connection with the personality of a person, after whom it was named in 2001. The Library has in its fund documents about the life and work of M. I. Suvorov, a collection of lifetime editions and works a lot to preserve the memory of the personality of the poet and teacher. The Library serves users with visual impairments throughout the Tver region, tiphlogists, teachers, relatives of disabled people of other categories, as well as all residents of the microdistrict at the location of the Library and its branches. The main contingent of readers is visually impaired people of groups 1 and 2. Among the Library readers are not only adults, but also children with visual impairments. 90 disabled persons of different categories are served at home in the city of Tver, and 95 – in the region. The total number of readers is 3,017. The total fund is 101,304 copies, of which: audio materials – 50,528 copies; Braille publications – 11,294 copies; electronic publications – 4,251 copies; video films – 1,060 copies. Publications for reading

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<sup>6</sup> В. М. Суворова, „Роль книги и чтения в жизни незрячих”, Российская государственная библиотека для слепых: 100-летие эпохи доступного чтения: Междунар. науч.-практ. конф. (Москва, 18–19 ноября 2020 г.), сост. Е. В. Захарова (Москва: РГБС, 2021), 153–159.

in Braille and audio materials for listening with the help of tiphloreorders, CD and mp3 players, tiphloflashplayers are sent out free of charge.<sup>7</sup>

Since 1998, the department of reproduction and special printing (until 2011 – editorial and publishing) has been working on the production of publications in flat large-scale and dot-relief font, CD-ROM and flash cards, relief and graphic documents. The staff of the Library also has speakers who “read” books aloud on magnetic tape or disk; layout designers who prepare publications for printing. For many years, the Library has maintained fruitful relations with the specialized publishing house “LOGOS VOS” (Moscow). The activity of this publishing and printing typhloinformation complex is associated with the information rehabilitation of visually impaired people.

One of the modern directions of the state social policy in relation to people with disabilities in the Russian Federation is the elimination of visual information barriers in obtaining socially significant information, in the implementation of the legal right of the blind and visually impaired to information support. To meet the cultural needs in a visually oriented world, a blind person experiencing specific difficulties is helped by typhlocommentation, which allows him to effectively perceive any object, action or phenomenon and makes paintings, photographs, films, performances accessible to understanding. Modern inclusive technologies and innovations make art more understandable for people with visual problems. It is also important to note the moment of the impact of typhlocommentation on the emotional state of a listener with visual limitations, because typhlocommentation allows one to “see” the previously invisible, to understand the previously incomprehensible. At present stage of the formation of a typhlocommentation system, it is often the employees of special libraries who serve the blind user according to the rules of ethical norms of communication and traditionally explain and describe the phenomena, objects and events surrounding the blind person, act as effective and universal typhlocommenters-volunteers.

The Library, as a center for adaptive reading, not only offers readers with visual disabilities all the options for accessible reading, but also develops new approaches to organizing socio-cultural rehabilitation of users with visual disabilities. Due to the innovative ideas of the Library staff forms of bibliotherapy develop and increase. In 2021, the non-profit organization “Expert” (headed by

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<sup>7</sup> В. М. Суворова, С. В. Макарова, „Об именной библиотеке и мемориальном фонде ТОСБС им. М. И. Суворова”, Информационный бюллетень РБА / ГПИБ России 86 (2019): 59–63.

Anastasia Savina), as part of its project “Art at your fingertips”, presented 10 relief and graphic paintings, masterpieces of world painting, designed for tactile perception of people with visual disabilities. This event marked the beginning of the work of the Tver Regional Special Library for the Blind named after M.I. Suvorov, aimed at adapting visual arts to the perception of the blind and popularizing inclusive practices in the field of culture and art. So, there appeared a project, called “Talking canvases”. Thus, the situation is changing: people with visual disabilities have received a figurative idea of paintings, and specialists in the field of culture have felt the importance of the topic, noted the importance of typhlocommentation services in the life of a blind person.<sup>8</sup>

Today, there are companies in our country that offer services for the creation, distribution, sale and marketing of Braille, audio and electronic books and are happy to cooperate with authors working with publishers who need help in distributing their works to readers. The latest technologies are used all over the world in book printing and book restoration, including for blind and visually impaired users. For example, the branch of the American Red Cross (Fairfield, New Jersey) uses OBR technology. The agency prepares Braille texts (the fund is 9.5 thousand copies in paper and electronic formats) for the Center for the Blind and serves as the main supplier of Braille printed products. OBR is a multifunctional program that allows to save Braille documents to disk in the form of formatted Braille files; reprint old, out-of-print Braille books; scan and translate into electronic format for their further use.<sup>9</sup>

The mission of both special publishing complexes and special libraries is the same: to provide free and open access to information for visually impaired people and other people with disabilities, to promote their social rehabilitation and integration in society. This is done, first of all, through a book that accompanies a person all his life, opens a window to a new unknown world, helps him to understand difficult life situations. Without the book, neither education nor the culture of our society would be possible.

2020–2021 have become very difficult years all over the world. During the pandemic, libraries around the world are faced with a choice of what services and how to offer them, ranging from minimal restrictions to complete closure. IFLA Secretary General Gerald Leitner noted the importance of mutual support and solidarity in both professional and human terms. He also urged

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<sup>8</sup> И. Н. Бирюкова, „Проблемы внедрения социальной услуги тифлокомментирования в среду незрячего человека”, *Информационный бюллетень РБА / ГПИИБ России* 93 (2021): 9–11.

<sup>9</sup> Т. В. Синёва, В. М. Суворова, „Книга в жизни незрячих”, *Информационный бюллетень РБА / ГПИИБ России* 80 (2017): 51–52.

librarians to consider the temporary difficulties associated with the spread of the pandemic as an incentive for the development of new distance services and online communication skills.<sup>10</sup> Bibliotherapy was needed by remote readers as never before. It immediately became obvious that during the pandemic, libraries need to use information technologies and services to develop new remote forms of library services, developing a new type of audience — remote. With the introduction of a high-alert mode, life in many libraries seemed to stop for a while. Someone a little earlier, someone a little later came to the conclusion that one of the main manifestations of activity can be online events, as well as reading books aloud on the phone and audio information release through library sites. For example, daily 330 libraries of the Moscow region conducted an average of 530 online broadcasts, which were remotely visited by about 60 thousand people. In total, 6,901 online events have been held since April 1, 2020: in total, these Internet events have collected 805,519 views. The topics of the events are diverse. In particular, these are reading aloud; reviews; lectures; educational films and programs; virtual exhibitions; master classes (including creative, culinary, etc.); quizzes, riddles, games for ingenuity; interviews.<sup>11</sup>

It was evident that not only books can be used as a bibliotherapy tool, as during the pandemic period recommendations were collected for libraries to work with books in the fight against coronavirus. In the current situation, it was important not only to observe the rules of disinfection, but also to preserve the integrity of documents. The document of the RLA became a “methodological guide to action” for all libraries of the country, as it clearly defined what can be done and what cannot be done: allocate a separate “quarantine room” for books; develop a system for labeling books entering quarantine; think over the shortest way for a “conditionally infected” book in the library to the quarantine room; quarantine books for 3 to 5 days at a relative humidity of no more than 55% at a temperature of 16–18°C and in the dark; if possible, the book can be packed in a plastic or paper bag; it is permissible to put several books in a box; the number of employees entering the quarantine room should be minimal.<sup>12</sup>

Successful activity during the period of self-isolation has helped many libraries to gain new experience, initiate and implement spectacular ideas,

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.ifla.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/assets/hq/annual-reports/2020.pdf> (accessed October 7, 2021).

<sup>11</sup> В. М. Суворова. „О периоде пандемии и выходу библиотек из карантина. Рекомендации Российской библиотечной ассоциации по выходу библиотек из карантина”, *Библиотека и закон: журнал-справочник* 50 (Москва: Либер-Дом, 2021): 15–26.

<sup>12</sup> [http://www.rba.ru/netcat\\_files/userfiles/news/2020/04\\_06/RBA\\_recom.pdf](http://www.rba.ru/netcat_files/userfiles/news/2020/04_06/RBA_recom.pdf) (accessed October 7, 2021).



find new partnerships, large-scale network projects that will continue after the libraries return to their usual working conditions.

The YouTube channel of the project “Green City TV” posted a video of an interview with Mikhail Dmitrievich Afanasyev, President of the Russian Library Association. It was devoted to the topic “Pandemic and the future of libraries”. According to Mikhail Dmitrievich, the situation of recent months can be viewed as a social experiment that opens up new perspectives for understanding the library profession, its meaning and future; to determine the place of the library and the book and its bibliotherapeutic effect in the digital space and the formation of development strategies.<sup>13</sup>

During 2020–2021 the Tver Regional Special Library for the Blind named after Mikhail I. Suvorov works online. And one can follow the active links on the web-site of the library. TRSLB project: THE LIBRARY IS ALWAYS NEAR YOU shows that the disabled readers are not alone and can have an access to audio and video materials prepared by employees of the Tver Special Library, so that its users can have an interesting and useful time. The blind readers are provided with Electronic catalog, Electronic Library, Voice Educational Portal, Correspondence and home service, Movies with typhlocommentaries. The Tver Regional Special Library for the Blind named after Mikhail I. Suvorov provides home-based, correspondence and non-stationary library and information services to their users. Books are delivered according to the preliminary requests of the library readers and according to the schedule of servicing the districts of Tver. Using the correspondence subscription service, the readers can receive literature of special formats with mail delivery.<sup>14</sup>

There are many other types of bibliotherapy and art therapy that are not mentioned in this article. It is not necessary to try to apply each type of bibliotherapy in one library, and the choice of methods should be approached very individually, depending on the readers with whom you work. A librarian, with rare exceptions, cannot replace a psychologist, and no one expects this from him. But to create conditions in the library for such forms, to attract professionals to this activity – it is quite possible.

The Russian Library Association has in its structure the Section for libraries which serve the disabled. Each year the Competition of the Russian Library Association (RLA) “The Best Professional Book of the Year – 2021” is held in the framework of the Moscow International Book Fair. On September, 24, 2021 the winning libraries were named, who submitted their publications to

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QGXR-sTJPwU> (accessed October 7, 2021).

<sup>14</sup> <http://tosbs.tverlib.ru/> (accessed October 7, 2021).



the RLA Competition in four nominations “To help a professional”, “Library in the cultural life of society”, “Polygraphic execution” and “Publications for the blind and visually impaired”. Fourteen editions from Kaluga, Moscow, Pskov, Saratov, Tver took part in this competition in the fourth special nomination. The editions were in different formats: DVD-ROM and audio-slide-disks, tactile editions with relief-graphic images and audio content, reproduced editions for the visually impaired and Braille publications for totally blind.<sup>15</sup>

The Tver Regional Special Library for the Blind named after Mikhail I. Suvorov was nominated with special diploma for the book: Suvorov M.I. *Be alive...: poems. Mikhail Suvorov / 101 poets of the XXI century / comp. Valeriya Suvorova.* – M.: Publishing house “Nikitskiye Vorota”, 2020. – 112 p. This book is devoted to the 90th anniversary of M.I. Suvorov. The Library fulfills its memorial function, at the same time it promotes the literary local history, trying to use poetry as one of the bibliotherapy methods during the difficult period of pandemic restrictions in which all of us live nowadays.

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<sup>15</sup> [http://www.rba.ru/news/news\\_4372.html](http://www.rba.ru/news/news_4372.html) (accessed October 7, 2021).

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## КЊИГА И БИБЛИОТЕКА У ЖИВОТУ СЛЕПИХ

**Сажетак:** Чланак се бави применом библиотерапије, нарочито код особа са посебним потребама. Дати су примери из Регионалне специјалне библиотеке за слепе „М. И. Суворов” у Тверу, а приказани су и неки методи библиотерапије коришћени за време пандемије.

**Кључне речи:** библиотерапија, специјална библиотека, аудио-дескрипција, Регионална специјална библиотеке за слепе „М. И. Суворов”, Секција Друштва библиотекара Русије, библиотеке за особе са посебним потребама.

Примљено: 18. августа 2021.

Исправке: 7. октобра 2021.

Прихваћено: 5. новембра 2021.