

The 'Velocirepte' programme

Executive summary. 25th April 2018

'Velocirepte, the reading challenge' is a **programme to promote reading among users of Barcelona Libraries**, which is run by the city's Libraries Consortium. The immediate background to the 'Velocirepte' programme lies in the experience of the Sagrada Familia Library in 2016, which encouraged reading by applying concepts taken from *gamification* theories.

The guidelines of the 2018 edition of the 'Velocirepte' programme specified that the objective of the programme was **'to promote reading among the users of Barcelona Libraries.'** A second objective, which arose from the first, was also mentioned in several communication initiatives: **'to discover new authors and/or subjects that would otherwise not have been read.'**



The 'Velocirepte' programme ran from January to December 2018, and consisted of reading at least one book per month on a suggested challenge (i.e. topic).

Although there are similar reading promotion programmes with gamification characteristics, **there are few benchmarks for evaluation** with a scope similar to this study.

Objectives and scope of the evaluation

The implementation and the impact of the program were evaluated.

The implementation evaluation included a profile of the participants (of their sociodemographic characteristics and their use of the library prior to the 'Velocirepte' programme), and assessed their level of adherence to the programme, in addition to the level of satisfaction with the programme among both the participants and library staff.

The impact evaluation endeavoured to determine the impact that the 'Velocirepte' programme had on the use of the loan service, as well as on other library services (Wi-Fi, *Internet and +¹*, etc.).

¹ Internet and + is a service of Internet access by computers in public libraries.

Results for the implementation

Profile of participants

A database of the participants in the programme was created, based on the information provided when they registered, in order to examine their profiles according to their sociodemographic characteristics.

The profile of the participants was compared with the profile of other users, using existing databases from Barcelona libraries, to determine whether the programme reached a representative profile of the users of Barcelona libraries.

The information on the two groups was compared with information from the databases of uses of various services from Barcelona libraries, in order to ascertain whether the participants in the 'Velocirepte' programme engaged in previous uses that were different from the non-participating users. Loan, Wi-Fi and Internet and + were the specific services examined for the two years prior to the start of the programme (2016 and 2017).

The main results were as follows:

- **3,524 users participated in the 'Velocirepte' programme.**
- By gender, **68%** of the participants in the 'Velocirepte' programme were **female**, a proportion 10 points higher than the library users who did not participate in the programme.
- By age, **most of the participants were under 12 years old** (38%), and the second largest group consisted of people aged between 36 and 50 years old (23%). The **participants' average age was 32 years old**, while that of the non-participants was 42 years old.
- By district, there were **high levels of participation** in **Nou Barris** and **Horta-Guinardó**.
- **7 out of 10 participants** in the 'Velocirepte' programme **had already been active users** of library services in the previous two years, **2 were activated users** (i.e. users who had not used the library services for the previous two years despite being members) and **1 had joined the library** in 2018.
- **The participants in the 'Velocirepte' programme used the loan service more intensively than the non-participants in 2017.** In 2017, the average number of loans for 'Velocirepte' programme participants was 14.4 loans for the year, while the figure for non-participants was 3.4.

Adherence to the programme

Monthly records were kept regarding which participants met the challenges included in the programme, and this information was incorporated into the database of programme participants.

This information was used to examine the **degree of adherence to the programme** throughout the year, and patterns for joining and leaving the programme were identified, with the following main results:

- The participants in the 'Velocirepte' programme met **an average of 7.7 of the 12 challenges**.

- **Almost 40% of the participants met all 12 challenges.**

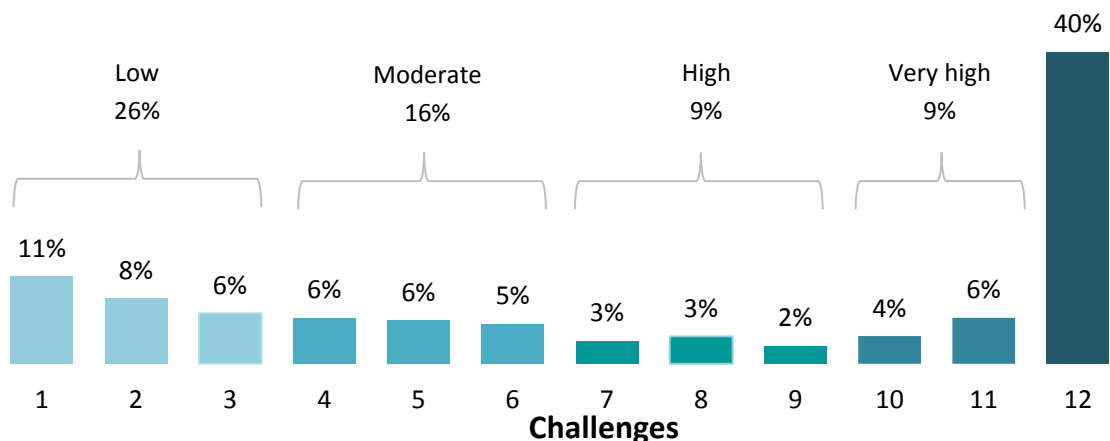


Figure 1. Percentage of participants in the 'Velocirepte' programme according to the number of challenges met

- **People over 51 years old of age met the most challenges** (an average of almost 9 challenges). At the other end of the scale, 13 to 16 year olds (5.9), 17 to 24 year olds (5.6), and 25 to 35 year olds (6.7) met the fewest challenges.
- **The participants who already made frequent use of the loan service in 2017** were those **who met the highest average number of challenges** in the 'Velocirepte' programme.
- By district, users from **Horta-Guinardó, Sant Andreu and Sant Martí** were the most consistent in meeting challenges.
- **Adherence to the programme declined as the months progressed**, from 93% participation in January to 47% in December.
- **The participants mainly dropped out during the first six months:** i.e. from February to July. The participants who left in the summer months were mostly under 16 years old.

Survey of participants on leaving the programme

A survey was conducted on the participants who had left the programme during the first two months (January or February). The questionnaires were distributed by email in late June 2018. The most relevant findings were:

- The respondents mentioned **lack of time** as their **main reason for leaving the programme**.
- Their **ratings** for the **level of interest of the programme, the service from library staff and the registration procedure** were **high** (around 7.7 out of 10). The lowest rating was for the suggested reading matter (at 6.4).

The library staff's opinion of the programme

The professionals' opinion of the programme was examined by means of a survey of the managers of the city's 40 municipal libraries. The questionnaire, sent in June 2018, aimed to identify problems and good practices in the implementation of the programme in each library, and suggestions for improvement. The library staff mentioned the following issues:

- They received the **full guidelines for the programme after it had begun**, which made it difficult for them to publicise the project, due to lack of full information.
- **The IT program used in the registration process was complicated, impractical and difficult to operate**. They also mentioned the complexity and slowness of the protocol designed for monitoring the programme.
- Regarding the selected reading matter, they emphasised the **delay in sending the reading lists to the libraries** and the **limitations of each library's holdings**.
- They said they had **no information about the prizes before the programme started**, and that **the prizes were inappropriate**.
- Library staff highlighted **physical elements** (displays, signs and posters in different areas of the library), **the involvement of staff** and the **use of social networks and other library activities** to provide information about the 'Velocirepte' programme, as key factors in its success.

Survey on participant satisfaction with the programme

A survey was conducted of all the participants in the 'Velocirepte' programme (who had not left the programme before February). The questionnaires were distributed by email in January 2019. The most relevant findings were:

- Participants in the programme **used the library a great deal**. Forty-one per cent said they did so at least once a month, and 29% reported using it at least once a week.
- **The library's own communication campaign** (posters, leaflets, etc.) was the **main channel for publicising** the 'Velocirepte' programme. **The library staff and the libraries' email newsletter** were also important channels for finding out about it.
- **Half of the respondents said they shared the recommended reading** on the 'Velocirepte' programme with other participants.
- **Four out of five respondents said they had discovered new items for reading**. The major discoveries were names of specific authors, African literature and poetry.
- The **aspects that the users liked most** were **discovering new reading matter** (topics, authors or genres), **the variety of subjects**, and the **suggestions for specific books** from the libraries.
- As aspects for improvement, they mentioned **the limitations of some of the libraries' holdings in some areas**, and the **registration and validation process for the challenges**.
- **The general level of interest in the programme and the service from staff was highly rated by the respondents**, at 8.8 out of 10. The registration procedure was rated at 8.1 and the reading suggestions at 7.9.
- **They would recommend the programme with a rating of 8.9**.

Impact results

An impact evaluation was carried out using a **quasi-experimental methodology, Coarsened Exact Matching**, which enabled identification of the net effects of the programme on a sample of the participants and on a control group of non-participating library users with almost identical characteristics.

- The 'Velocirepte' programme **had a positive impact on the use of the library loan service**: participants in the 'Velocirepte' programme took out an average of **8.76 more books** than the control group.

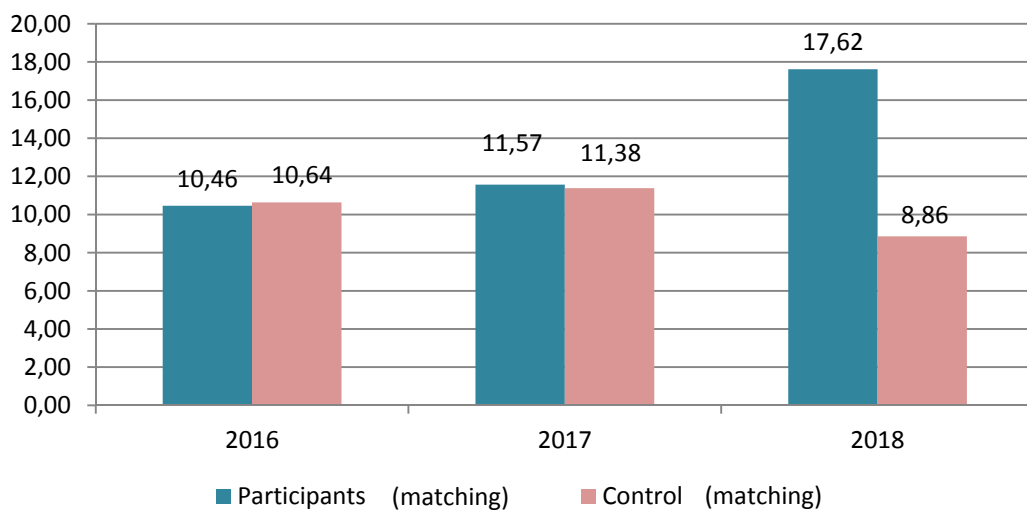


Figure 2. Average book loans in 2016-2018 according to participants and control group

- The 'Velocirepte' programme **did not reduce the previous levels of use of the loan service**; i.e., the uses of the lending service created by the 'Velocirepte' programme were complementary to the previous uses.
- **The level of adherence to the 'Velocirepte' programme helps explain the patterns of use of the lending service** in 2018.
- The 'Velocirepte' programme **had a more limited impact on use of Wi-Fi and Internet services (Internet and +)**.

Conclusions and recommendations

Main **conclusions** of the evaluation, regarding the objective 'to promote reading among the users of Barcelona's Libraries', were that:

- the 'Velocirepte' participants were users who were already very active users of the lending service
- it was an intergenerational programme, with most participants being families with children.
- participation in the programme increased the level of use of the lending service.

Relating to the objective 'to discover new authors and/or subjects that would otherwise not have been read', according to the satisfaction survey, main conclusions were that:

- almost 80% of participants said they had discovered new reading matter.
- participants said that the discovery of subjects and authors was one of the items that they liked most.

The evaluation team made some **recommendations** arising from the work done:

- Identify new means of access to the programme for specific groups that would enable more people to take part.
- Consider the possibility of limiting the reading challenges in future editions to the months of January-June and September-December, and use other reading recommendation formulas for the summer months.
- Involve the library staff in the definition of challenges and highlight the specificity of library holdings.
- Make improvements to the IT programs for user management and recording challenges.