

What and how do Hungarian children read?

¿Qué y cómo leen los niños húngaros?

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Recibido: 30/07/2019

Aceptado: 19/07/2020

RESUMEN

La primera encuesta representativa relacionada con los hábitos de lectura en Hungría fue realizada en 1964. Entre otros aspectos midió el número de personas que leían y aquello que leían. Desde entonces sólo se han realizado cuatro estudios de este tipo, y por tanto, a finales de 2017, ya era hora de realizar un nuevo análisis. Mientras se elaboraba el cuestionario y analizaba los resultados el autor tuvo la posibilidad de trabajar con datos que podrían ser interesantes para investigadores más allá de las fronteras de Hungría. El estudio se centra en niños entre 3 y 18 años divididos en grupos de edad e indica los tipos de libros que leen. También examina otros componentes de los comportamientos relacionados con sus hábitos de lectura. (Que leen además de libros, que parte de la semana/día dedican a leer, que tipos de géneros prefieren, etc.).

En relación con los nativos digitales, se presta especial atención a la relación entre aptitudes de lectura y el tiempo que invierten en el uso de internet y móviles. Por último pero no menos importante se ha realizado un esfuerzo en dibujar un panorama general de los hábitos de lectura en Hungría (con especial énfasis en la juventud), y los cambios que podemos destacar en comparación con estudios previos.

PALABRAS CLAVES

Literatura Infantil, Hábitos Lectores en Hungría, Géneros Literarios, Cultura digital, Lectura

ABSTRACT

The first representative survey about reading habits in Hungary was conducted in 1964. Among others it gauged the number of people reading and what they read. Since then only four researches were pursued of the kind, thus it was time we carried out a new analysis at the end of 2017. While compiling the questionnaire and analyzing the result I had the possibility to work with data that could be interesting for researchers beyond the borders of Hungary.

In my study I focus on children in the 3–18 age range divided to age groups, and I present the types of books they read. I also examine other components of their behavior related to their reading habits (What they read apart from books, which part of the week/day they dedicate to reading, which genres they prefer etc.).

Talking about digital natives, I pay special heed to the correspondence between reading aptitude and the time they invest in using the internet and their smart phones.

Last but not least I make an attempt to sketch a general picture of Hungarian reading habits (laying special emphasis on the youth), and the changes we can notice compared to the previous surveys.

KEYWORDS

Children's Literature, Reading Research in Hungary, Genres, Digital Culture, Reading



Para citar este artículo: Gombos, P. (2020). What and how do Hungarian children read?. *EA, Escuela Abierta*, 23, 3-17. [doi:10.29257/EA23.2020.01](https://doi.org/10.29257/EA23.2020.01)

1. ANTECEDENTS, THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Up until the recent past, there were five major representative surveys carried out in Hungary concerning reading habits: one in 1964, another in 1978, then in 1986, in 2000 and in 2005. Over the course of these surveys, the researchers were mainly interested in what and how Hungarians read.

A new study is overdue not only because the last one was conducted more than ten years ago, but also thanks to the expansion of digital culture and smart phone infiltration, which has become so significant that we can feel its impact on every aspect of life, including reading habits.

It is not necessary to explain the importance of the topic, all of us have to understand the consequences of the switch-over to digital culture, but it is important in particular for our children, the people educating them and those who work with them (Wolf, 2018).

We have achieved by 2020 that it is not only unnecessary to describe or explain Marc Prensky's term about "digital natives" (and characteristically it has not been done in professional literature sources recently), but the phenomena, the characteristic features may be familiar as well – even for the laypeople... That is why we are going to focus primarily on those phenomena in the following, which are more closely related to the consumption of culture and reading.

Although we would neither like to cite nor create a definition, we regard it as a kind of definition valid for the members of this generation that they are present in the virtual space not temporarily but almost exclusively (Köpeczi-Bócz, 2013). It has become evident by now to what extent the headway of electronic communication has changed the people's social relationships and cognitive structure (Lehmann, 2017). In addition, the internet galaxy has brought about dramatic transformation compared to that. The change may be observed in several fields as well. On one hand, new types of media appear continuously, on the other hand, they stimulate many more senses than the previous ones (Lehmann, 2017), which is generating and going to generate more and more changes. The notion of "exaptation" is especially worth considering. This phenomenon became decisive at the beginning of the 21st century, its most obvious example is the change of the function of mobile phones (from the substitution of landline telephones, that is from the tool used for talking to each other, to the use of the internet) (Lehmann, 2017).

We need to be aware of the fact that, for the first time in the history of mankind, the younger generation did not settle for merely following the change of culture (by which we mean the digital culture's move to the forefront), but surpassed their parents and teachers from the very beginning (Varga, 2012). Among the many characteristics by which we can distinguish this generation from the previous ones is that their reading technique is different.

"In the digital era nobody reads as efficiently as in the last century. Longer topographies are often skipped even by the lovers of literature. The experience of associating ideas used to mean knowledge while nowadays there is a lot more information available in pictures." (Gyarmathy, 2012).

It's also important to note that according to a survey from the United States (Greenfield, 2009) the so-called reading for fun disappeared from digital natives' lives. (Prensky, 2001).

They mostly read to acquire information. Therefore, they have difficulty looking at it as an entertainment activity. The greatest challenge of our time might be making these children believe that reading is fun, not useful.

2. THE METHODOLOGY OF THE RESEARCH, ITS MAIN AIM

Thanks to an extensive tender in late 2017 (EFOP-3.3.3-VEKOP-16-2016-00001) issued by Fővárosi Szabó Ervin Könyvtár we had the opportunity to carry out new representative research as part of the project called “My library”. This time, we had the chance to include questions regarding the impact of digitalization and Internet use on reading books. The survey was conducted by Máté Tóth. As a member of the expert group, I took part in compiling the questionnaire and analyzing the gathered data (the members of the expert group have been selected and called upon by the project leaders based on the reference of different professional organizations taking into consideration their previous activities).

The survey was based on personal request, the pollsters visited the potential interviewees with a laptop in their homes, so the answers were directly recorded in a data base. It was a two-tier talk, first the parents were asked the questions which the children could not answer (eg. the parents’ level of education, media tools in the family, the size of th home library, the family’s income etc.), after that in case of the children under 10 the data recording went on together with the parents, in case of the children above that age directly with them.

During the interview exactly 1502 people were questioned. The method of the selection of the interviewees was the so called walking methodology, the essence of which is that on a determined walking trail – according to a determined system of rules – bells were rung and the data recording was conducted with the children and their parents living there. Altogether 121 settlements were selected, in which all the county seats, several smaller towns and villages could be found besides Budapest. The streets were chosen randomly. The method ensured equal chances for everybody to get into the sample, but it did not ensure that the composition of the people questioned represented the composition of the domestic population, which was corrected by the weighting of the data obtained (the examination of the correlations has been done by a chi-square test).

Several questions have been taken over from previous surveys so that the results could be compared. However, we had the opportunity to take new aspects into consideration. Besides examining the impact of digital culture, we also included the 3–5 age group for the first time. Needless to say, it was the parents who answered the question whether they told tales to their children. In case of a positive answer, we also asked them where and what kind of stories they told.

A particular part of the research was dedicated to the attitude towards librarians and the habits concerning the use of libraries. This study will not discuss them.

For us the main aim of the research was to get a comprehensive picture about the Hungarian children’s relationship to reading, their reading habits. It was equally important whether the difference of the digital natives from earlier generations could be seen or measured in this field.

3. ABOUT THE RESULTS

We present the results of the survey and the conclusions I have drawn from them according to age groups. I mainly focus on authors, texts and phenomena that may be interesting even for those less familiar with Hungarian literature.

3.1. 3–5 age group

Many might find it strange that a survey on reading habits includes an age group whose members (or at least a great majority of them) apparently do not read by themselves. We need to add that listening to a text read by someone else is an utterly different kind of experience and process compared to reception by means of decodification (reading by themselves). This is a fact, even though the key factor – the visualization of the perceived information, the so-called inner imaging – is present in both cases. What's more, it has a distinguished role in both processes. We often find that a low level of comprehension is rooted in the lack or poor use of inner imaging (Szinger, 2009).

This pre-school period (the so-called emergent literacy phase) is extremely important with regard to the development of future readers, but it can only be effective in preparing the formation of literacy skills if (proper quality) picture-books and toys are provided which – for example by developing fine motor skills – help the formation and development of movements that later become fundamental to reading and writing. It is also important to provide possibilities for the child to observe situations thanks to which writing and reading gain prestige (Podráczy y Nyitrai, 2015). Thus, it is equally important for the child to see how reading is present in their environment (especially in their parents' life) and to make the children meet high quality editions.

In our questionnaire, we asked about both the last book the children had read and their favorite books. This way, we managed to compile two diverse ranking lists. Since most of the books from the lists are presumably unknown in Spain, instead of delineating the whole ranking list, we prefer to talk about our experiences.

It is thought-provoking, though not necessarily surprising, that the first 3 places are occupied by the same authors on both lists. The success of Erika Bartos' volumes has been perpetual for 15 years now, especially two of her series, the stories of Bogyó and Babóca as well as those of Anna, Peti and Gergő. Their common feature is the relatively simple language, the realistic and uncomplicated storyline. The same thing is true for the illustrations, which are also designed by the author. Moreover, the protagonists are depicted by computer, with few and simple lines. The overwhelming success of the series has provoked heated discussions among Hungarian experts.

Many have voiced their displeasure at the perhaps excessively simple language and the use of computers to create the illustrations, which renders them less exciting. But parents are less bothered by the critiques. You may find some that consistently refrain from purchasing these volumes, but most of them buy the whole series with great enthusiasm. It is to the author's credit that these books definitely make reading interactive. Perhaps it is precisely the simplicity of the drawings and the text that stimulates the parents and their children to talk about them, and we have to appreciate that.

Among the most popular books, we also find tale collections (unfortunately, only a few containing folk tales), including volumes by the Brothers Grimm. The latter are worth mentioning as, despite being engaging and worthwhile stories, they are not appropriate for the 3–5 age group. There are two possible explanations for that. One assumption may be that the parents named a well-known author, as it is still better than claiming "I don't tell tales to my child". The other presumption is that these parents failed to assess the maturity of their children and they indeed chose a tale that is inappropriate for their age. Unfortunately, this is not the only example for this case. Many otherwise excellent Hungarian authors (such as István Csukás or Ervin Lázár) appear among the favorites even though they take aim at a more mature audience, but we can find names like Andersen, Milne or even Disney (as an author!) at the very beginning of the list (Winnie the Pooh, for example, is the fourth most popular book in this age group.)

The explanation of this popularity lies in the success of the cartoons. The children (or the parents) most likely come in contact with the books based on the cartoons and not the original versions. We have two reasons to con-

sider this a problem. Firstly, because a child of such age should not watch films regularly. Secondly, because the quality of these cartoon-based editions is often very poor. A drawing that is suitable for telling a story will definitely not meet the expectations of a good illustration as their criteria stand in stark contrast.

We paid special attention to the time and the place where the youngest children typically have their reading experience. The most common answer was “at home, weekdays in the evening” (according to 48.9% of parents, they often read at this time), but the weekends were only slightly less popular (45%).

It is worth reflecting on the fact that the proportion of those reading in libraries is the lowest in this age group (0.7%), and the proportion of those never reading in libraries is startling: 91.1%. This is obviously the parents’ responsibility, but it raises serious questions about why the baby and mom clubs and the parent-child programs that libraries have made a great effort to organize for years do not make themselves felt.

3.2. 6–10 age group

Although we have taken only one step on the “age ladder”, it is a quite significant one. At the age of seven, many children already read on their own, and by the age of nine, they can become perceivers of longer prosaic works, mainly fairy tale novels without any “mediator”. This age group is still susceptible to tales and, what’s more, new genres such as fairy tales appear in the repertoire, which are not digestible for nursery-school students.

Interestingly enough, here the proportion of children reading at the weekend is significantly higher (32.8%) than those reading on weekdays in the evening (17.8%). At the same time, this group has the lowest proportion of readers while travelling (1.5%).

Concerning the first half, the list of favorite books is more or less equivalent to the one we saw in the 3–5 age group (Erika Bartos’ books, folk tales, some tales from the Brothers Grimm and Andersen’s stories). This is somewhat understandable when we talk about children at the age of six or seven, but by the age of 8–10, it would be nice to see a shift from oversimplified language and plots towards fairy tale novels.

On the contrary, the second half of the list is mainly filled with books that would require more mature readers: Winnie the Pooh and *The Little Prince*. The latter is a perfect example of a phenomenon which is referred to as “literary pedophilia” by psychologist Erika Stiblar (Turai, 2009). The term is used in cases when children meet a certain book too early, before obtaining the maturity that the work requires. In order to perceive and comprehend Saint-Exupéry’s classic, a certain amount of life experience is required, which most of the students acquire by their high school years.

3.3. 10–14 age group

This age group is peculiar in many aspects. By this time, all the children become independent readers and their own taste is starting to have an increasingly dominant influence on what kind of books they choose. On the other hand, due to the profoundness of their reading, they have more and more reading in common with the older generation, even with their parents. Astonishingly, this is the group where audiobooks are most frequently used and they were the ones who, in response to the question “What sort of texts did you read yesterday? I list several types of texts, please mark if you read them yesterday!”, indicated billboards, advertisements, plugs and wall scripts (Tóth, 2017).

At the same time, this is the age group where peer pressure is most significant: novels, let alone series, can practically “sweep through” a generation. The fact that the members of this group already filled in the questionnaire by themselves is not negligible from this point of view. If we take into account the fact that more and more film adaptations are created from books that are mainly aimed at this group (which might be inspiring for teenagers), we may assume the appearance of a dominant author whose books could have been indicated by at least 10% of the interviewees as a favorite or currently read.

Nevertheless, for years now, the situation of “generational books” (Gombos, Hevérné and Kiss, 2015) is quite peculiar in Hungary: they are on the verge of extinction. The common experience is restricted to compulsory reading in school, which does not really provide pleasure. They all experience these compulsory books, but not as understanding, appreciating readers.

If we compare the list of favorite books to that of the books last read, we find quite a lot of similarities. The kind of novels we see there is even more interesting. The list is exclusively made up of celebrated contemporary novels (such as Harry Potter or Diary of a Wimpy Kid) and compulsory readings. The latter are all from Hungarian authors, and previous research has shown that they are not very popular among students (Gombos, 2009).

The question of compulsory reading has been provoking heated discussions for a long time in Hungary. The main problem is that while students are given undoubtedly valuable literature, they seem to read them reluctantly, with waning zeal. Even the teachers themselves can see that the number of students reading the texts voluntarily is alarming. According to a previously conducted survey, 13% of the teachers asked about their students claimed: “A lot of them read the books voluntarily” (Gombos, 2009). The explanation is not that complicated: almost all of the compulsory readings are from the 19th century, and even the newest ones are 90 years old. This way, both the language and the presented situations are hard to understand for the children. It is also disappointing that despite the fact that current curriculums do not contain any requirements about concrete titles (in the first 4 grades, we cannot see any), the teachers have been assigning the same books for decades, often because they are not aware of the changes. Many pedagogues are afraid the contemporary works are less challenging and lower in quality. It is also undeniable that some teachers are not familiar with these new books they could recommend in addition to or in place of the older ones.

The impact of all these factors is clearly visible in the recent survey. More than half of the books last read were a school assignment and we may presume that, instead of admitting that they do not read at all, some of the students marked their current compulsory reading (or in some cases that of previous years) as their last read book. It is hard to believe that the last book 16-17 year-old students read was a compulsory reading from four or five years earlier. If we take into consideration the fact that 28.5% of the girls and 38.7% of the boys in this age group never read (did not finish a single book last year), this appears to be a sensible explanation.

3.4. 14–18 age group

The members of the oldest category of children answered the questions without their parents and it might not be a coincidence that half of their list is made up of unambiguously contemporary works. There certainly are classics on the list, but they occupy less honorable positions. Among the foreign authors they most commonly mentioned are Rowling, Shakespeare, Defoe, Robin Cook and Stephen King.

Not surprisingly, this is the age group where the presence of e-books is most significant in everyday life and the reading of e-mails, panel discussions, social websites, texts and electronic messages is prominently high compared to the younger age groups or even the adults. They were also the ones with the highest percentage of “paper-based volumes” in response to the question: “What sort of texts did you read yesterday? I list several types of texts, please mark if you read them yesterday!” This might be explained by their studies. On the other hand, printed press was a lot less popular in this group.

This group mainly dedicates the weekends to reading (36.2% often read at this time), and they have the highest percentage of those reading in libraries, though only 6.6% listed it as a regular activity.

4. FEATURES UNRELATED TO AGE GROUPS

In this section, I would like to present and analyze the results that we decided not to differentiate according to age group. Firstly, because there is no point in comparing age groups for these aspects. Secondly, a general approach seemed more appropriate. Nonetheless, I will not fail to mention ages if it is worth focusing on a narrower age range.

4.1. Correspondence between reading attitude and Internet use

Internet use was a new element in this study, as the previous representative surveys regarding reading attitudes did not include this topic. Measuring the average time children spend using the Internet is already interesting in itself but measuring its impact on reading is even more interesting. The question was the following: “How often do you use the Internet (via computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone)?” While compiling the questionnaire, we thought a lot about how to measure the connection to the Internet, whether we could create a scale on which we could immediately place all the interviewees, from the Internet addicts to those who never use it. There have already been some attempts to measure the correspondence between reading and Internet use (Gombos, Hevérté and Kiss, 2015). However, those questions appear to have become out-of-date by now. This previous survey was conducted in 2012 and the infiltration of smartphones had not yet reached the point where they are today. Therefore, measuring Internet use via this gadget was not considered a relevant question. On the contrary, the question “How much time do you spend in front of your computer on a daily basis?” has become completely irrelevant, as the majority of Internet users carry their “computer” in their pocket. How much one is attached to the Internet/ phone, how often one feels the urge to check it, and whether or not there is a connection between reading little and using the Internet excessively are still important questions.

The highest level on the scale mentioned above was labelled “Almost continuously online, checks it every 10-20 minutes”, while the lowest level was marked “Does not use it at all”.

As for the children (from age 3 to 17), 5.2% of them claim to check their phone every 10-20 minutes. The number is staggering in itself, and it is even more frightening if we take into account the fact that 3-year-old children are also included in this category. What’s more, they contribute to the elevated proportion. On the other hand, we cannot ignore the fact that under the age of 10, it was the parents who answer the questions on behalf of the children, so what we learned is more likely how the parents perceive the situation rather than the actual time the child spends using the Internet.

There were two categories marked by a remarkable number of people (each of them by almost 21%), namely that of “once a day” and “several times a day”. Surprising as it is, the highest proportion (23.3%) of people opted for “I never use the Internet”. The presence of the youngest children could again distort this picture. Distributing the data according to age groups, we see the following Table 1:

Table 1

Distribution of data according to age groups

HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE THE INTERNET (VIA COMPUTER, LAPTOP, TABLET OR SMARTPHONE)											
	Checks it every 10-20 minutes (almost continuously online)	Every 1-2 hours	Several times a day	Once a day	Several times a week	Once or twice a week	Once or twice a month	Even less frequently	Does not use the Internet	Does not know/answer	Total
3–5 years	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	43 11.7%	38 10.4%	31 8.4%	3 0.8%	2 0.5%	250 68.1%	0 0.0%	367 100.0%
6–9 years	3 0.8%	12 3.2%	29 7.8%	77 20.6%	75 20.1%	45 12.0%	10 2.7%	3 0.8%	120 32.1%	0 0.0%	374 100.0%
10–13 years	22 5.8%	46 12.1%	110 29.0%	99 26.1%	59 15.6%	18 4.7%	1 0.3%	2 0.5%	21 5.5%	1 0.3%	379 100.0%
14–17 years	50 13.1%	61 16.0%	157 41.1%	80 20.9%	22 5.8%	2 0.5%	1 0.3%	0 0.0%	9 2.4%	0 0.0%	382 100.0%
Total	75 5.0%	119 7.9%	296 19.7%	299 19.9%	194 12.9%	96 6.4%	15 1.0%	7 0.5%	400 26.6%	1 0.1%	1502 100.0%

It is quite clear that in the 6–9 age group, the proportion is insignificant, it is slightly above average in the 10–13 group, while 13.1% of the teenagers aged between 14 and 17 claim to be online continuously.

The correspondence between the Internet use (smartphones) and reading habits is quite evidently demonstrable from the results. 57.7% of those continuously online have not read a single book in the last year! DIAGRAM 1 This is by far the highest proportion, as the second on the list were those who do not use the Internet at all, at “only” 44%. The proportion of “non-readers” is somewhat lower among those who check their phones every 1-2 hours (28.7%). (The correlation is significant in the 10–17 age group, $p < 0,001$).

Figure 1

Besides course books and compulsory readings, do you read books. Responders: The children who are continuously online

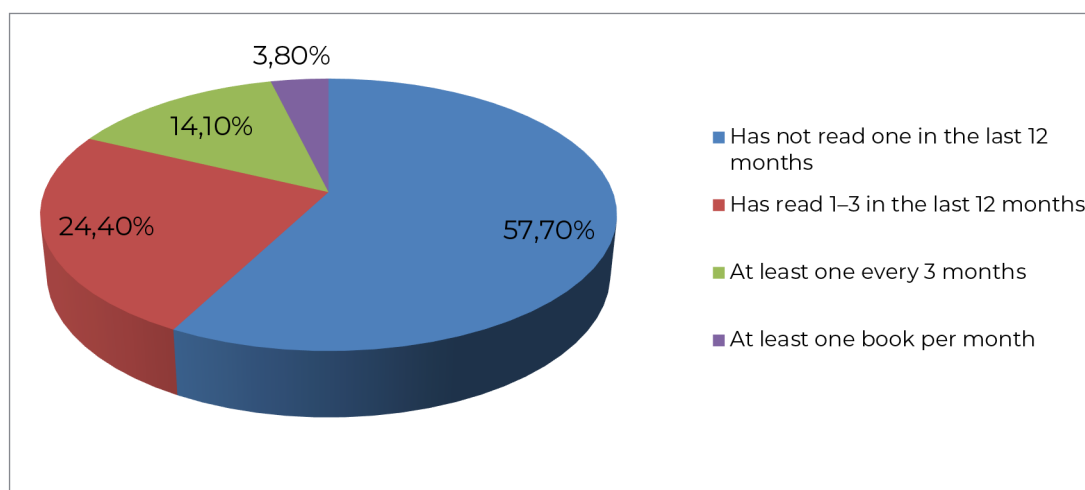


Table 2

Internet use frequency

How often do you use the Internet (via computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone):	BESIDES COURSE BOOKS AND COMPULSORY READINGS, DO YOU READ BOOKS (OR IF YOU CAN'T READ, DOES ANYONE READ TO YOU)				
	Has not read one in the last 12 months	Has read 1-3 in the last 12 months	At least one every 3 months	At least one book per month	Does not know/ answer
Checks it every 10-20 minutes (almost continuously online)	57.7%	24.4%	14.1%	3.8%	0.0%
Every 1-2 hours	28.7%	41.1%	21.7%	7.0%	1.6%
Every day	28.0%	42.4%	18.6%	8.7%	2.3%
Several times a day	33.5%	33.2%	20.1%	10.5%	2.6%
Several times a week	23.9%	39.8%	22.9%	11.9%	1.5%
Once or twice a week	28.3%	26.1%	27.2%	14.1%	4.3%
Even less frequently	33.3%	11.1%	0.0%	44.4%	11.1%
Does not use the Internet	44.4%	22.8%	13.4%	17.1%	2.3%

44% of those finishing at least one book per month use the Internet less frequently than once or twice a month. Exactly a quarter of those using it a little bit more frequently are considered an “elite reader” (one who reads at least 12 books a year). It is worth mentioning those who do not use the Internet at all as, perhaps surprisingly, 17.1% of them belong to the most active group of readers.

For what purpose do these children use the Internet? The previous survey confirmed the dominance of social media, as exactly two thirds of high school students claimed to use it. This was also verified by the current research. Since we saw the results as age distribution, it was easy to observe how social media burst into children’s lives at the age of ten.

4.2. Genres

While compiling the questionnaire, we considered it essential to include questions about the popular genres. It might be of importance, as there has been a significant change in this field in the last two decades. Previously celebrated genres such as Indian stories have practically become negligible, while others, particularly fantasy, have seen astounding success (it is difficult, almost impossible to compare the present data to previous representative researches. They have probably considered this field to be less important, so they have asked about only a few genres. In addition, in case of all previous researches different genre classifications have been used in the questionnaires.)

According to a study published in 2015 and conducted among high school students (Gombos, Hevérné and Kiss, 2015), there has been a significant “realignment” in this field. The fact that so-called Speculative fiction was the second most popular category after romantic stories is already astonishing, but an even more surprising change is that 39.5% of the girls also indicated it as a fancied genre. The popularity of the genres is shown in the following chart (Table 3):

Besides fantasy genres, there is another category which significantly strengthened –that of comics. In the 1980s, this genre was harshly criticized in Hungary. It was considered completely valueless and it could rely on a scarce number of readers. After a dynamic and promising start, its career? in Hungary (which hardly exceeded the security of literary adaptations) seemed to be halted as creators and readers had difficulties finding each other, likely thanks to the restricted number of both groups.

Changes were caused by the inflow of foreign works and nowadays, it is clear that the number of prestigious authors is infinitesimally small compared to the number of enthusiasts. This survey confirms our impressions about a possible change in this field.

The popularity of comics is noticeable in every age group, which is quite an interesting fact as it could previously only rely on certain age groups. On the whole, the genre managed to reach the popularity rate of 21%, which is higher than that of classic novels. This has several messages to convey. First of all, the libraries – those that have not done so yet – cannot seclude themselves from the genre *ab ovo*. What is more, it should precisely be the librarians that help choose the most worthwhile pieces, because – as in all genres – it is not the category itself to be valued, as there are examples for challenging, high-quality, weak and uninspired comics, too. On the other hand, the genre should get a little more attention in education too, for a very similar reason as the one we mentioned before: in this way we can make the students meet the more precious ones. Besides, comics could also help the work of teachers in many areas of teaching, from teaching foreign languages to reading comprehension.

Table 3

Popularity of the genres

	3–5 years	6–9 years	10–13 years	14–17 years	Total
<i>Fantasy</i>	0.00%	6.88%	24.32%	32.60%	17.33%
<i>Horror stories</i>	0.00%	0.98%	3.47%	10.19%	3.99%
<i>Escape literature</i>	3.21%	14.99%	37.72%	41.85%	26.25%
<i>Adventure stories</i>	0.72%	13.27%	41.44%	44.53%	27.07%
<i>Classic novels</i>	1.08%	4.41%	19.06%	32.85%	15.51%
<i>Picture books</i>	60.00%	37.99%	12.16%	0.00%	24.77%
<i>Comics</i>	11.83%	22.85%	24.07%	19.71%	20.27%
<i>Whodunnits, crime stories</i>	0.00%	1.72%	6.70%	19.71%	7.67%
<i>Tales, novels of initiation</i>	82.86%	76.66%	32.51%	8.50%	47.27%
<i>Nursery rhymes</i>	53.76%	30.96%	7.69%	0.00%	20.47%
<i>Sci-fi</i>	0.00%	2.21%	13.90%	22.38%	10.47%
<i>Riddles</i>	13.57%	19.41%	14.64%	7.52%	13.78%
<i>Romantic novels (for teenagers)</i>	0.00%	4.67%	20.60%	29.93%	15.00%
<i>Historical novels</i>	0.36%	3.69%	17.87%	27.01%	13.26%
<i>Vampire stories</i>	0.00%	1.47%	7.18%	14.11%	6.20%
<i>Poems, poems for children</i>	58.42%	41.03%	13.65%	8.52%	28.00%
<i>Scientific, documentary works</i>	2.51%	10.81%	26.98%	30.83%	19.11%
<i>Hobby</i>	0.72%	3.44%	13.15%	16.55%	9.13%
<i>Sport</i>	0.00%	7.11%	17.62%	18.93%	11.85%
<i>Other</i>	2.14%	1.47%	1.73%	2.67%	2.00%

When talking about genres, we have to note another important fact: the assessment of genre popularity or readers' taste does not work properly yet. Those compiling the surveys often create categories according to their own preferences and they are quite often biased. It would likely be worth establishing a unified category system using models from abroad which could be used in the long term. However, if we have the intention to examine readers' taste, the in-depth interview method might be the most efficient.

5. READERS AND “NON-READERS” IN HUNGARY

There is a cardinal question we have not discussed in detail: what is the proportion of readers and “non-readers” in Hungary? In previous surveys (examining the whole population, not only children), we saw the following (Table 4):

Table 4a

Reading frequency

READING FREQUENCY	1964	1985	2000	2005
Has not read one book in the last 12 months	41	38	52	60.2
Has read one book in the last 12 months	36	22	23	7.5
Has read at least one book in the last 3 months	36	23	13	15.9
Has read at least one book per month	23	17	12	16.4
Total	100	100	100	100.0

Today, the same chart looks like this:

Table 4b

Reading frequency

READING FREQUENCY	
Has not read one book in the last 12 months	50%
Has read 1-3 books in the last 12 months	28.9%
Has read at least one book in the last 3 months	13.2%
Has read at least one book per month	6.9%
Does not know/does not answer	1.1%

The same regarding children:

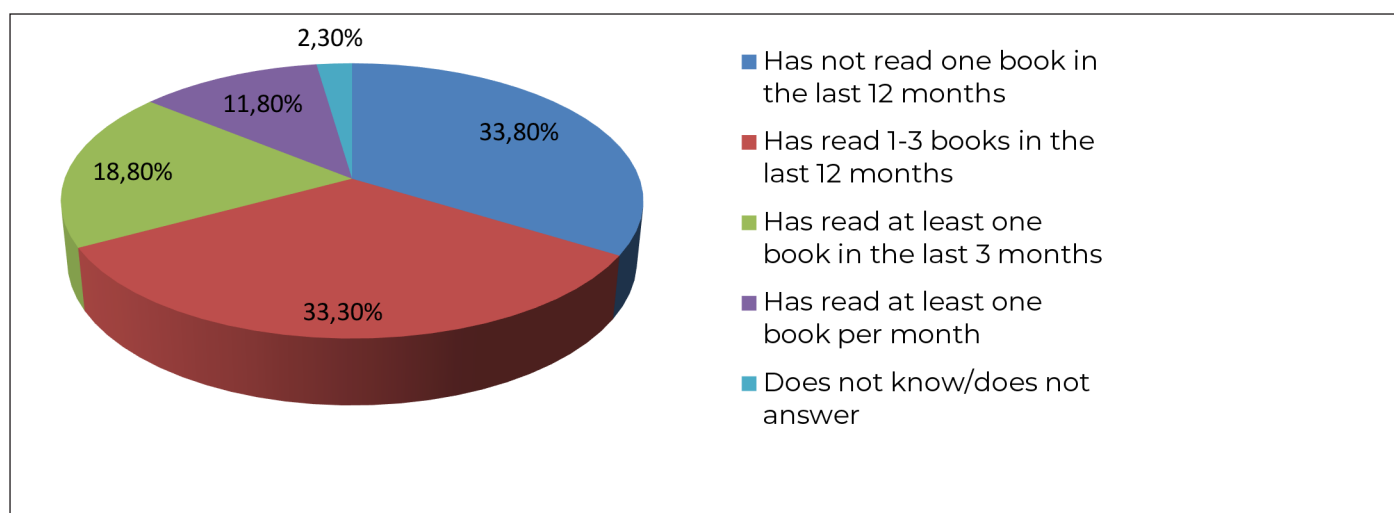
Table 4c

Reading frequency

READING FREQUENCY	
Has not read one book in the last 12 months	33.8%
Has read 1-3 books in the last 12 months	33.3%
Has read at least one book in the last 3 months	18.8%
Has read at least one book per month	11.8%
Does not know/does not answer	2.3%

Figure 2

Reading frequency - 2017 (Children)



This time, we ignore the fact that these numbers show progress compared to the previous survey (conducted in 2005). There are two places the deviation from the younger age group is seen:

- The proportion of those who never read (or those who are never read to) is lower among nursery-school-age children and school-age children.
- The number of “elite readers” (those who read at least one book per month) is higher among adults.

It is not surprising that in case of 14–17 year olds two third of those who do not read are boys ($p = 0,001$), and the motivation to read is significantly influenced by the mother’s level of education ($p < 0,001$).

It might be a question of whether the results for the 3–5 age group influence the general picture. Interestingly enough, in the case of non-readers, the result is somewhere between the 6 to 9-year-olds and 10 to 13-year-olds. The difference between the latter is almost insignificant, so we can claim that the result would not be drastically different if we excluded the youngest ones.

6. FINAL REFLECTIONS

Unfortunately, there is no possibility to compare the results to the ones of previous researches substantially because their data are not available according to age groups. Characteristically, the researchers have been interested in the whole sample, not the age groups. In this way we have been able to refer to the characteristic features of changes only in some cases.

Is it possible to generally summarize in the case of such an extensive, nuanced survey? Depending on our interests or research areas, obviously different pieces of information constitute an innovation or the ones which confirm our previous presumptions, results or experiences.

We have reached our most important aims with our research. The data obtained have proved that most of the digital natives, especially those who are continuously online, do not read books. It is an equally important result to see the change of the young people's reading taste. It may be instructive for schools, the educational administration that genres which have been considered to be marginal ones – comics, sci-fi, fantasy literature – have come into prominence.

The collected data still gives us a lot to do and analyze. This information is only the beginning of more thorough examinations, which may last until the next research is done. Fortunately, we do not have to wait long for that, as the survey will be reconducted at the end of 2019. With that, we hope to gain easily comparable data and a new milestone to observe tendencies and phenomena concerning the changes in reading culture in Hungary.

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Péter Gombos. I was born in 1973 in Zalaegerszeg, Hungary. I acquired university degrees in Primary School Teaching, Teaching of Religion and Boarding School Teaching, Teaching of Hungarian Literature and Grammar, Communication and Media Science and Hungarian Arts and Humanities. I obtained my PhD at the University of Pécs in 2009. My main fields of research are related to reading and children’s literature. I am also concerned about reading pedagogy, the sociology of reading, reading strategies and reading comprehension. I used to be the leader of the Hungarian Reading Association for four years, and currently I am the vice-president of it. I am also member of the European Literacy Association and the International Literacy Association. I took part in several Hungarian and international research, and so far 216 of my publications were issued, and they were cited 165 times. At present, I work as a deputy dean for scientific affairs of the Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of Kaposvár, besides I teach would-be pedagogues, stage designers and actors.

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