

Ellie – Virtual Assistant Librarian

Varna Public Library



GENERATION CODE
Born in the library



About the city of Varna

Varna (Bulgarian: Варна) is the third-largest city in Bulgaria and the largest city and seaside resort on the Bulgarian Black Sea Coast. Situated strategically in the Gulf of Varna, the city has been a major economic, social and cultural centre for almost three millennia. Historically known as Odessos (Ancient Greek: Ὀδησσός), Varna developed from a Thracian seaside settlement to a major seaport on the Black Sea.

Varna is an important centre for business, transportation, education, tourism, entertainment and healthcare. The city is referred to as the maritime capital of Bulgaria and has the headquarters of the Bulgarian Navy and merchant marine. In 2008, Varna was designated as the seat of the Black Sea Euroregion by the Council of Europe. In 2014, Varna was awarded the title of European Youth Capital 2017.

The oldest gold treasure in the world, belonging to the Varna culture, was discovered in the Varna Necropolis and dated to 4600–4200 BC.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Varna>





About Varna Public Library

- ◆ Pencho Slaveykov Regional Library was established in 1883 with the generous donations of prominent public figures and patriots from the city.
- ◆ The Library, the oldest cultural institution in the city of Varna, is a leading library institution in the country with responsibilities supporting the educational, informational, social, and cultural functions.
- ◆ The Library is a member of the Bulgarian Library and Information Association, the Balkan Libraries Union, and participates as a partner in various programs of non-government organisations and cultural institutions – the Global Libraries Program – Bulgaria, British Council, Goethe-Institute, Alliance Française, etc.



The Library in Digital Era

Varna Public Library has a collection of approximately 900 000 library documents. Its modern vision is also manifested in the new forms that have replaced the traditional library services:

- ◆ Online catalog
- ◆ Digital library
- ◆ Electronic system for user registration
- ◆ Self-check points for book borrowing
- ◆ Digital user's card
- ◆ Online book order
- ◆ Bibliographic enquiry order
- ◆ Interlibrary loan order
- ◆ E-User module “My Library”
- ◆ Ellie – a virtual assistant librarian, the newest staff member



Covid-19's Impact on Libraries

- ◇ Covid-19's impact on libraries goes beyond books.
- ◇ Covid-19 affects the communication with library users.
- ◇ We can use this new reality to offer something different. That's what we're working on.
- ◇ Many of us are challenged, but we're coming up with good, creative ideas!



"Hello, can I help you?"

- ◇ ... is such a well-known phrase that it has become the equivalent of one of the most popular cultural institutions - libraries.
- ◇ Varna Public Library management strives to follow world trends in the field of information technologies and good library practices.
- ◇ The Covid-19 Lockdown provokes necessity and provides time to create an online tool for continuing communication with the library users.
- ◇ Since the bots are able to respond to a remarkably large number of user inquiries with accurate information, Varna Public Library decides to use a CHATBOT as a virtual assistant librarian.
- ◇ The decision for developing a chatbot is a logical solution in the context of the library development strategy.



What is CHATBOT?

- ❖ A Chatbot is an artificial intelligence (AI) program that can simulate a conversation (or a chat) with a user in natural language through messaging applications, websites, mobile applications or by phone.
- ❖ One of the great advantages of chatbots is that, unlike applications, they are not downloaded, it is not necessary to update them and they do not take up space in the phone's memory.

<https://www.chatcompose.com/>



How do we implement a CHATBOT?

1. Define the scope
2. Find a reliable software company
3. Figure out the budget
4. Create an avatar
5. Build the knowledge base
6. Put the chatbot on the library website & FB Messenger
7. Read session transcripts
8. Train to improve the knowledge base
9. Evaluate the chatbot



Who helps us?

<https://umni.co/en/>

**FIRST CHATBOT AGENCY IN
BULGARIA**

Plan, Build, Support - We do it ALL



We are the first specialized chatbot agency in Bulgaria that not only offers ChatBOT as part of our services. We are the first exclusive chatbot agency on the market.



Meet Ellie!

Hello! I am Ellie,
the virtual assistant
librarian of Varna
Public Library.



I am here to help
you with
information about
our library services.



What does Ellie do?

- ◇ She provides Main Menu Buttons.
- ◇ She introduces the library structure to the users.
- ◇ She explains library rules and terms.
- ◇ She communicates with text and visual elements, such as images and emoticons.
- ◇ She responds to user messages appropriate enough to continue the conversation.
- ◇ She helps users to extend book borrowing terms.
- ◇ She navigates users through the library catalogs.
- ◇ She refers to the library E-services.

It is more interactive to talk to a chatbot rather than searching on website 😊

Main Menu Buttons



Extending borrowing term



Library services



Online catalog



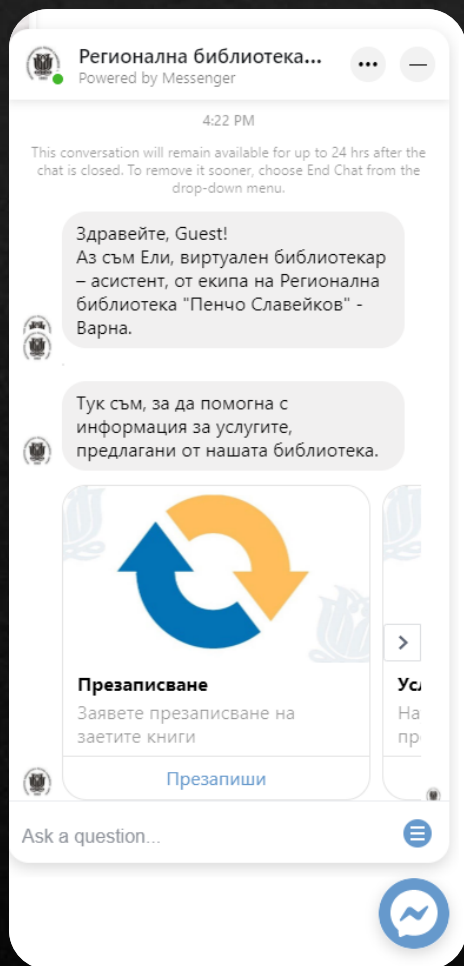
Events in the Library



Address and opening hours



Library rules and terms

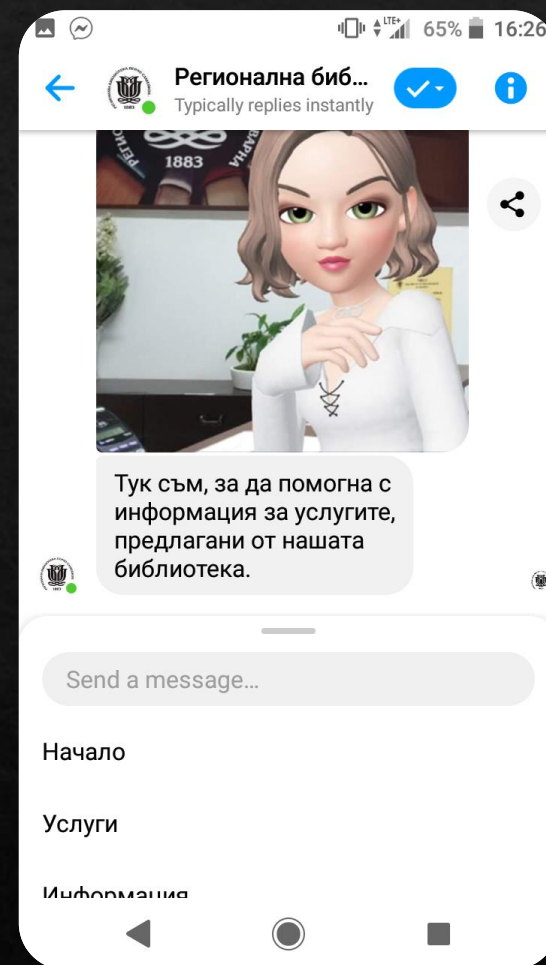


Ellie on the Library website

<http://www.libvar.bg/>

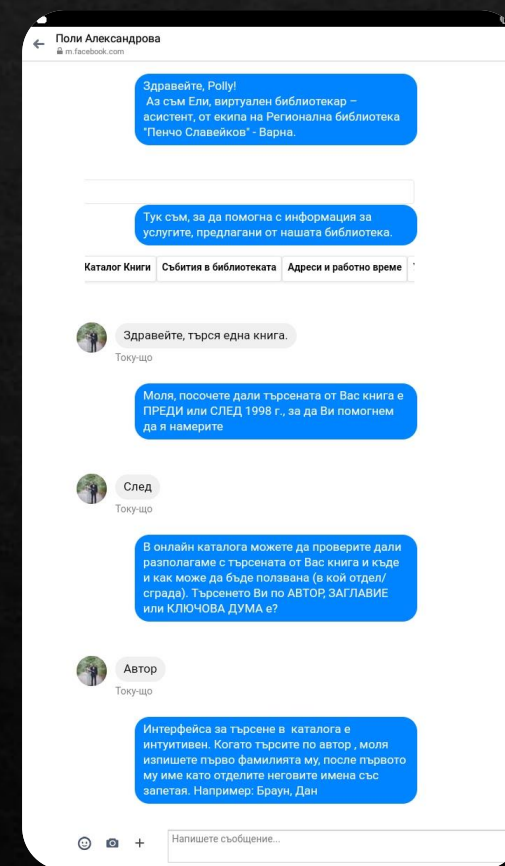
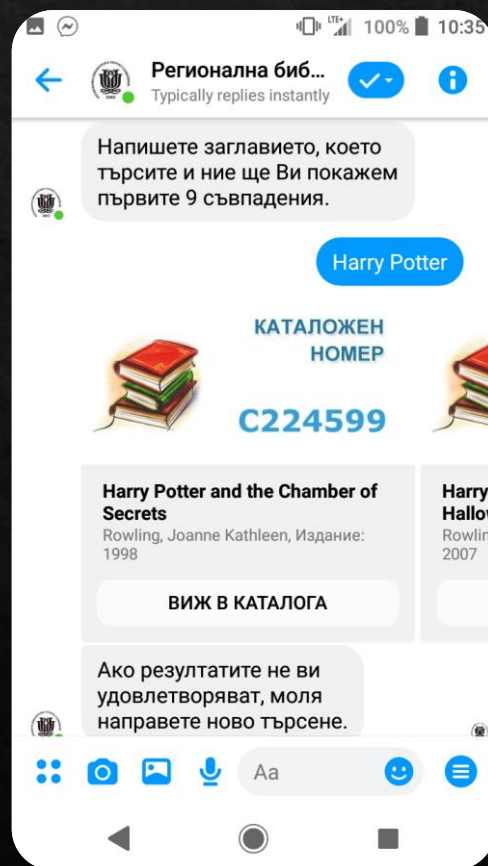
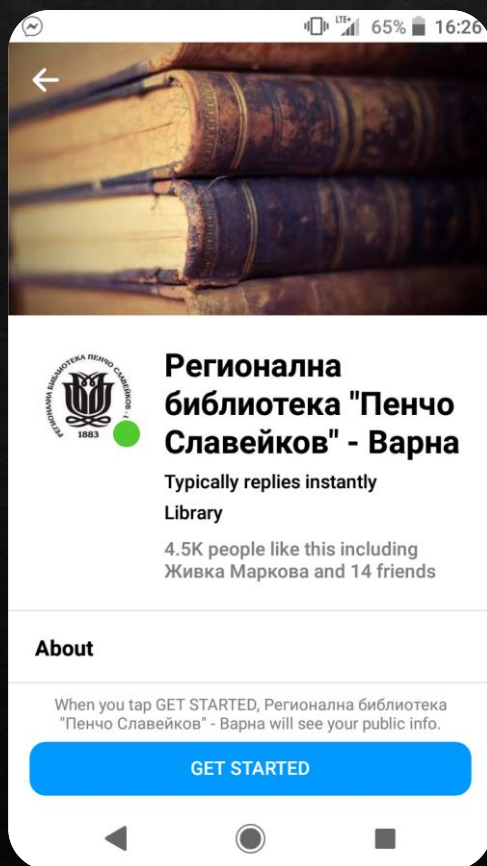
Ellie on Facebook & Messenger

<https://www.facebook.com/libvarna>



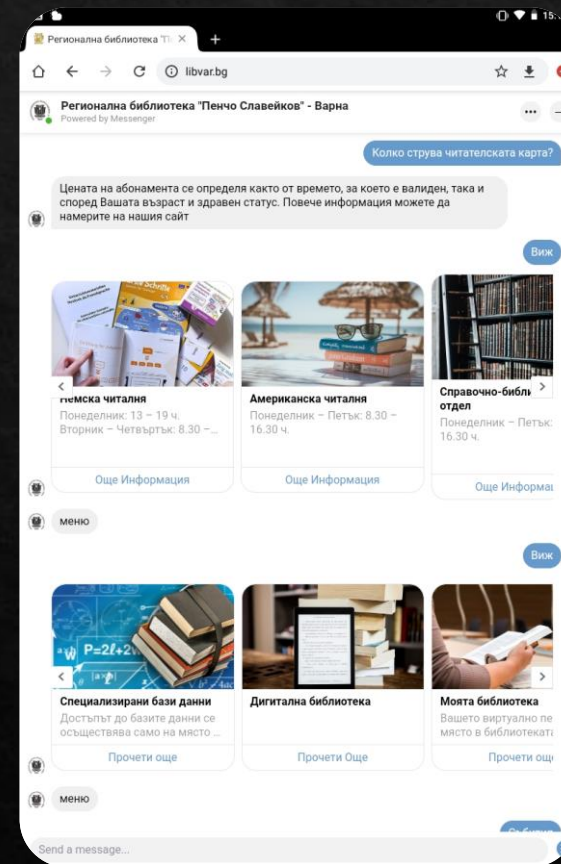
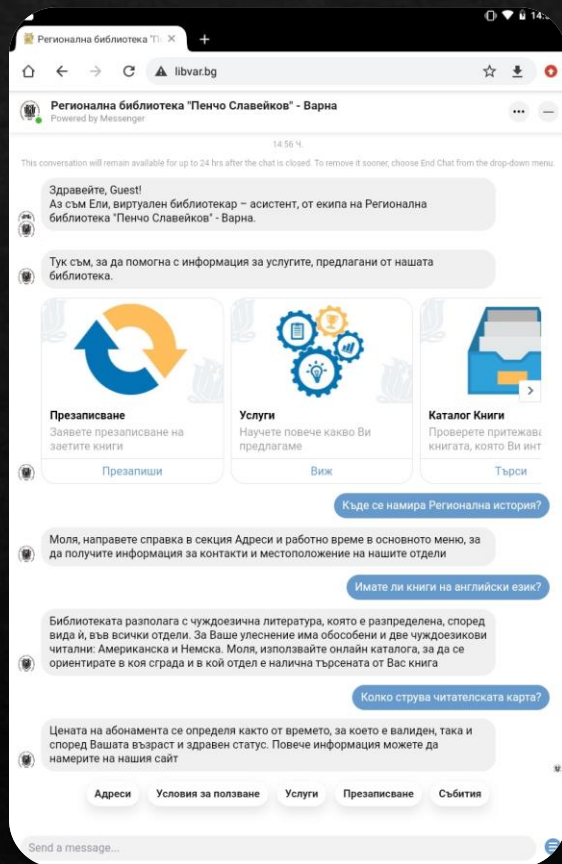
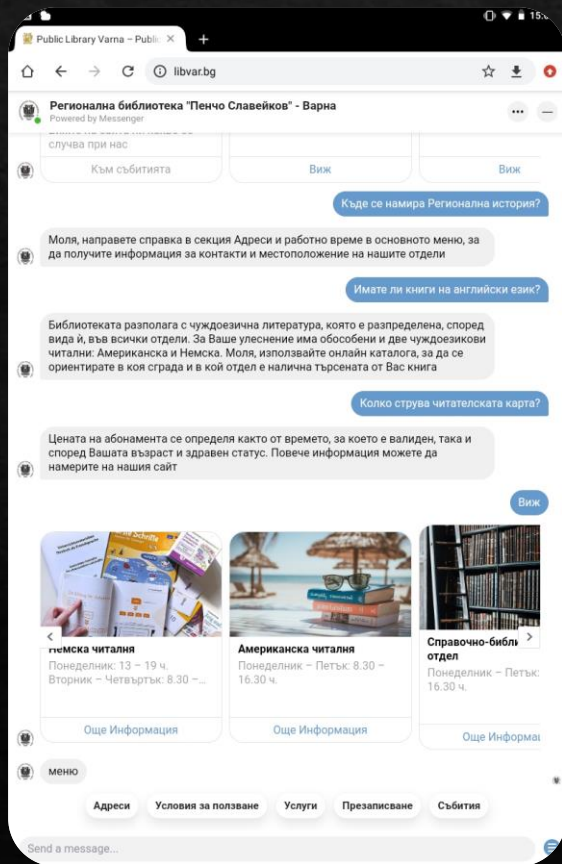


Ellie in action 😊



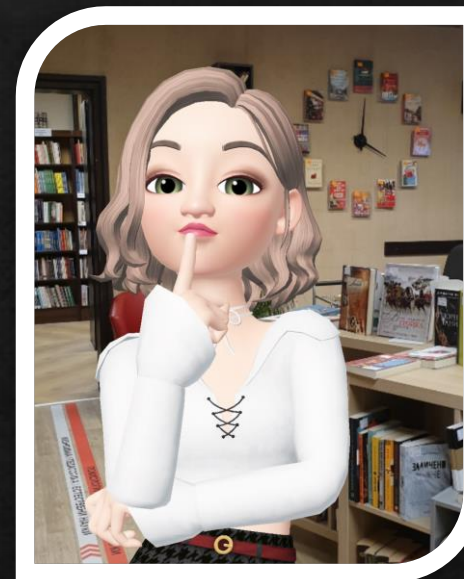


Ellie in action (2) 😊



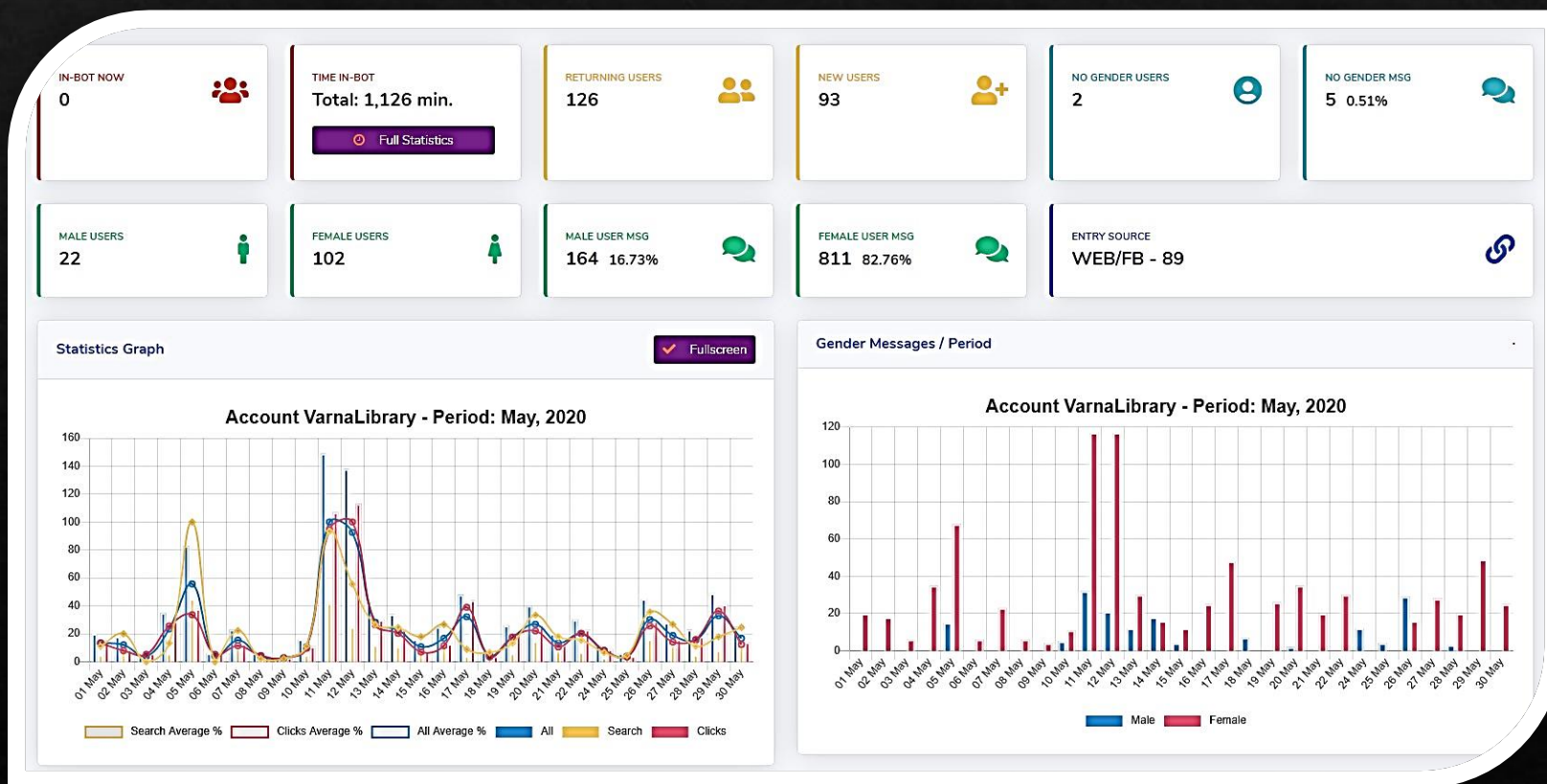
Chatbot Analytics

Exchanged messages per month



Chatbot Analytics (2)

Example of full statistics



What are the direct results?

◆ Improving customer service

The chatbot provided an opportunity to take full advantage of technologies that effectively save time. The implemented innovation allows to process a huge amount of information in a short time and thanks to it to be useful both for our users and for the library itself.

◆ Extending working hours

This innovative way of communication guarantees our users visiting the library's website or Facebook page, immediate and personalized help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

◆ Assignment of specific library functions

One of the routine functions performed by librarians is to extend book borrowing terms. This service can be requested through various communication channels - in person, by phone, by e-mail, through the tools provided by the module "My Library", and from 2020 also through Ellie - the virtual assistant-librarian. This turns out to be one of the most used functions performed by the chatbot.

◆ Attracting users

The chatbot is part of the library's overall strategy for attracting users. Its implementation on the website and Facebook page of the library has become an ideal tool for increasing the interest of the readership and the authority of the library.

◆ Increasing the volume of communication in Messenger

After the activation of Ellie, there is an exponential increase in communication between users and the library in Messenger. Prior to the launch of the chatbot, the messenger channel was used negligibly little.



What are the long-term benefits?

Even after the Covid-19 lockdown our Chatbot service is helping us with:

- ◇ providing information and answering questions in real-time
- ◇ simplifying the process of communication “librarian-user”
- ◇ optimization of the working hours of staff
- ◇ saving human resources

It was nice to meet you!



<http://www.libvar.bg/>
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