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The Library Grows with Me: The First Graduates of the Summer School for Young Librarians Return

In September, 17 young librarians from nine public libraries in Romania successfully graduated from Biblionet's first Summer School for Young Librarians.

During the Summer School, the participants – all librarians younger than 35 and in the profession for fewer than five years – attended courses on advocacy, communication, marketing, and project management. The experience connected the young librarians with other professionals to provide them with key skills to help their libraries best meet their communities' information needs.

To encourage increased leadership and involvement from these rising library professionals, the course participants also started a blog (<http://blogtibro.wordpress.com/>) to share library news and ideas, with a focus on issues relevant for younger librarians.

Once back home, the Summer School graduates are implementing new library projects that meet their communities' needs. In addition, the participants are returning home with an expanded network of colleagues around the country on whom they can de-



Graduates of the first Summer School for Young Librarians are preparing implementation new projects in their home libraries

pend for mutual support. According to Raluca Nuțiu of Mureș County, "The Summer School was wonderful, thanks to the relationships we established here with our colleagues, the knowledgeable trainers, and the relaxed atmosphere that encouraged us to work as a team."

Once-skeptical Librarian Gains New Skills, New Outlook on Technology

Vica Blaga recently discovered how computers can compliment, rather than threaten her Galati County town library. For the past 26 years, Blaga has been the librarian of Tg.Bujor town library, but in 2004, she began a relationship with new technologies that she considered "the enemy." Blaga explained, "I didn't want to accept that books and pens would be supplanted by computers."

However, when the county library administration insisted that each librarian do their best to raise funds for computers in their libraries, she "wrote a funding application

that [she] didn't want to be approved, a first in my career. But, the approval came, and I received a brand new computer."

However unwilling, Mrs. Blaga attended an IT skills course organized by the county library, and despite her discomfort, began using new technologies. "I was afraid I would not be able to keep up with my younger co-workers who had some experience in computers, talking of Google, IDs, Yahoo, and Messengers ... I didn't un-

Pensioner Teaches IT Skills to Peers at Biblionet Library

In Odorheiu Secuiesc, pensioners are now learning how to stay in touch with family and loved ones online at their local library.

In 2004, Kovacs Erzsebet, a 64 year-old retiree began going to the town's Pensioner Benefit Fund to attend choir and dance lessons. While visiting with other pensioners in her classes, a common theme often came up: how to stay in touch with family abroad. For many in this city in Harghita County, and throughout Romania, maintaining contact with relatives living and working in other countries is difficult and expensive. Kovacs, in order to assist her peers and share the knowledge she would gain, took it on herself to take an IT training course from the Modern Business Science College.

After taking the course, Kovacs worked with the Pensioner Benefit Fund to petition their community for a training computer, and by Christmas, their requests were answered by a local company. Kovacs shared her newfound knowledge with her friends, and over

the years, secured seven additional computer donations. Demand, however, outpaced the resources they had as 50 to 60 pensioners were attending Kovacs IT training courses, to the point where they could no longer all fit in one location.

Following a conversation with Kovacs' local librarian and the director of the Pensioner Benefit Fund, the Biblionet partner library arranged for Kovacs to use their additional computer resources to teach a weekly class at the library.

Thanks to her course, the library has become a key place for the elderly to use IT, be it for reuniting with distant relatives,



Kovacs, 64, teaches computer and internet literacy courses at the local library in Odorheiu Secuiesc

seeing video of their grandchildren for the first time, or even the pride of knowing that retirement can be a time for new learning.

Two Years Later: Iasi Libraries Continue to Innovate

When librarians in Iasi first began experimenting with adding computers to their offering of library services, they weren't quite sure what to expect. Today, after more than two years of collaboration with the Biblionet program, libraries in Scanteia and Belcesti are changing what it means to be a "conventional" Romanian library.

Scanteia

- The farmers in the commune began to use the computer to access European funds and a program supporting agriculturists;
- 20 children applied for and got scholarships by means of the "I Want to Go to High School" programme;
- At least 10 persons found jobs;
- The town hall downloaded free accounting and welfare software.

Belcesti:

- "The Importance of Vitamins for the Body", a contest carried out with the help of the general school in Rusi;
- Presentation of the traditions and myths in the area to a group of Turkish students who came in the community;
- Simulation of the high school graduation exam for the 12th grade students in the commune;
- The contest "How to Manage in the Unknown", carried out at the library with students from Iasi, Neamt and Bacau counties;
- The project "The Road to Europe Goes Through Your Commune" and the contest "The Most European Family" within the framework of the mentioned project;
- Many residents obtained the necessary documentation to open businesses, for example the Lincu family who established a flower hothouse.

Librarians Cut Ribbons Over New IT Equipment in Hunedoara County

In September, Libraries in Hunedoara County celebrated the official launch of a newly expanded slate of library services. Welcoming new technologies into their community, local and county public officials, representatives of the County Library in Deva, the press, and most importantly, library patrons all attended the inauguration.

These new computers will help attract new visitors to their public libraries, and will help deliver key information and communication services for their users. As Ioan Jurj, of Bretea Romana noted, "Not everybody has access to the internet or the means to purchase a computer at home. [At their local public library], people will now be able to keep in touch with their loved ones from afar, be entertained, or learn in a pleasant environment."

Bretea Romana's public library, opened in the building of a former bar, is now home to over 9,000 books and is an active gathering place for the commune. Vulcan, Petrosani, Petrila, Blajeni, Bretea Romana, and Brad are among the first sites in Hunedoara whose libraries will receive new IT equipment, an investment amounting to more than \$140,000, supplied through the Biblionet program.



Young library visitors helped welcome the new services available in Hunedoara County

Braila Librarian, Mayor Keep the Internet on Despite Budget Challenges

By Corina Ciuraru
Biblionet Coordinator, Braila County



Gemeenele librarian Nicoleta Manzala and Mayor Petrica Calu found a way to keep the library's internet connection despite economic difficulties and budget challenges

Gemeenele, in Braila county has everything you would expect from a small town: a town hall, church, school, and palace of culture where the library is located. And today, despite recent budget cutbacks, the library has new computers a commitment to an ongoing internet connection thanks to the mayor and librarian Nicoleta Manzala.

In many areas Romania's national telecom provider Romtelecom already offers internet service, but in Gemeenele a new connection involved a substantial initial investment that the town had to pay. When Manzala wanted her library to partner with the Biblionet program, she knew securing a reliable broadband connection would require a collaborative approach. Working together with other public institutions, the library partnered with the school and city hall to share a single internet connection. Despite difficult economic times, Mayor Petrica Calu supported the initiative and helped the partnership obtain the necessary funding.

But after partnering with the Biblionet program and receiving new computers and IT training, the town encountered even bigger budget problems. Due to an accounting error and reduced revenue, the budget would no longer support the 600 RON (\$200 USD) monthly cost.

I almost lost my breath when I heard the news. Each commune that joined this project was the result of hard work that involved the county coordinator, the librarian and the mayor. It is not easy to see everything collapse.

Fortunately, the mayor of Gemeenele knew everything that happened in his commune. When children would visit the library and use the computers, he could see how happy they were. He could also see how deeply involved the librarian was in this project, and above all he was aware that he had promised to provide local people with free access to the information.

Because of the mayor's relationships with Manzala, the two were able to approach the problem together. They approached the county requested supplemental funding to cover the town's budget deficit and were granted equalization funds to cover the gap and continue to pay the broadband connection as promised. The librarian proudly told that to me, so that I would be relieved as well. In Gemeenele, Braila county, Biblionet keeps moving on. If you really want something, then you will definitely find a way to get it. Just ask the people in Gemeenele.

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Librarian Gains New Outlook on Technology

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derstand a word they said. I even thought about retirement, but apparently I was too young for that," Blaga recalled.

Things changed for Blaga one day, when she received a diagnosis of a potentially serious medical condition. She wanted to learn some more about this disease, so she rushed to medical books to conduct research. "They didn't tell me much," Mrs. Blaga recalls. "Then I turned to the computer, went online for the first time and learned many things – risks, treatments, the best doctor, appointments, forum discussions, and so on. During this difficult time, that computer – once my 'enemy,' became my best friend and a good adviser." Not long after her first positive experience using computer resources, Biblionet began working with and training librarians in Galati County, including Vica Blaga. "The trainers helped me understand better what a computer can do and helped ease my concerns over computers. I learned not only how to use



the internet and office applications, but most importantly, how to help others," Blaga explains.

Since partnering with Biblionet, Blaga has become very active in bringing modern services to her library. On March 4, 2010, her library participated in the "Get Online" campaign, working to introduce the internet to the Tg. Bujor community. The event in Blaga's town was so successful it was featured on the campaign's website.

Blaga no longer sees the computer in her library as a threat, but as an asset and incentive—a way to bring in new visitors. "While a few years ago I thought that books, my friends of 26 years, were in danger of being marginalized by computers, now I see that they serve each other through promotion programs, for example." Blaga is showing no signs of slowing down her newfound pride in modernizing her library. In July, she submitted a winning entry in the Biblionet's "I Am a Librarian" contest, which she found out about entirely from internet research. She proudly shared, "I must confess that I am twice as proud today that my Library has been and will remain the indisputable leader in my community.

Vica Blaga's winning "Get Online" Day entry is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zxl0lnxsw5Q>

Bihor County Libraries Coordinate Community Cleanup

On Saturday, September 25, libraries in Bihor County coordinated a volunteer effort of more than 150 people to take part in "Let's Do it Romania," a community cleanup effort. As part of "Let's Do It Romania," the volunteers – local students, library users, and librarians in seven communities – filled and removed more than 200 bags of garbage in the county.

The necessity for the cleanup was grave, with one county library official noting "30 garbage bags, television sets, tires, and a car windshield" discarded on the edge of the woods near her town. As leaders within their communities, the libraries took an active role in the volunteer effort, securing contributions from local authorities and the sanitation service for tools, gloves, trash bags, and eventual pickup of the collected waste.

