

GLOBAL LIBRARIES ROMANIA

Monthly Newsletter

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NEWS IN BRIEF

IREX Distributes Pilot Site Grants

On January 31, 2008 IREX distributed grant agreements for the creation of the Global Libraries program's 13 pilot Internet centers, based in the counties of Iasi, Tulcea, Bucharest/Ifov, Hunedoara, and Salaj. The establishment of pilot sites is an integral component of the Global Libraries planning grant.

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Introducing the Pilot Sites

IREX has worked in close collaboration with five county libraries and their communities to identify and the 13 pilot library Internet centers that will take part in the Global Libraries planning stage.

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ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:

First Steering Committee Meeting



On Tuesday, January 29, 2008, IREX and the Romanian government conducted the first meeting of the program's Steering Committee.

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Baru Community Outreach Meeting

IREX Advocacy and Training Specialist Monica Grecu shared program plans and learned about community priorities during an outreach

meeting in the Baru commune in Hunedoara County.

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First Regional Workshop

Together with the Iasi County Council, Iasi County Library, and the Center for Mediation and Community Safety (CMSC), IREX is preparing the program's first regional workshop for the end of February.

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ONLINE FORUM UPDATE

Global Libraries Initiative

 **BIBLIOTECA.RO**



The community participation contest review board met in an online discussion forum on biblioteca.ro on January 18, to review and select the winner of the December edition of the contest. Members of the review board included an NGO representative from

the Partners Foundation for Local Development, a librarian from the Bucharest Metropolitan Library, and IREX staff. Meeting online, the group was able to determine a winner using a model of transparency in which their deliberations are available for public view. Using this

tool, IREX is able to both involve a wide range of stakeholders in the selection process and ensure that results are shared widely, enhancing the learning experience for all program partners. ■

IREX DISTRIBUTES PILOT SITE GRANTS

On January 31, 2008 IREX distributed grant agreements for the inception of 13 pilot site Internet centers in five counties throughout Romania including Iasi, Tulcea, Bucharest/Ilfov, Hunedoara, and Salaj. The establishment of pilot sites is integral to the program's planning stage, and is designed to inform a full scale national program that will equip public libraries with computers in order to offer public free access to the Internet. Beginning in October 2007, IREX identified local partner NGOs and

mas holiday, project proposals were submitted and received by IREX. Consultations with the Association of Public Libraries and Librarians (ANBPR) provided IREX guidance in determining the funding allocated per pilot site for computer hardware. IREX also centralized training requests from each of the project proposals resulting in the development of a core training package that will consist of MS Office, Internet applications, Internet center management, and customer service and outreach training courses.

equipment for their local public libraries. In Hunedoara County, the county library will procure their own equipment while the local government will procure the equipment for their local public library. Last, in Salaj County, the Friends of the Library Association will procure the computer hardware for the county library as well as for the two remaining pilot sites. Each of these procurements will provide relevant information for determining the most effective means by which to approach procurement when



county library representatives to formulate local partnerships that would determine the hosts of each of the 13 pilot site communities. In a process that linked county libraries with local NGO representatives, an evaluation of potential sites took place, and by December 2007, the 13 communities were selected.

Following the selection of the pilot sites, local NGOs provided guidance to the selected communities in detailing their project proposals and began the process of evaluating the training needs for the local librarians. Prior to the Christ-

In order to gain insight into different procurement possibilities, IREX has requested that grantees use a series of means by which to procure equipment. In the case of Iasi County, the County Council will procure the computer hardware for the county library as well as for the two commune libraries. In Tulcea County the Tulcea County Library will procure the equipment for both the county library and the selected pilot site. In Bucharest/Ilfov the Metropolitan Library will procure their own equipment while the local governments of the two selected pilot communities will procure the

managing the full scale national program. IREX expects to record variations in the amount of time it will take the different institutions to conduct the procurement process, their ability to negotiate favorable prices, differences in customer support mechanisms, delivery time and expenses, and in the capacity of each institution to manage the procurement process.

Pilot sites are expected to open in March and April. ■

“I hope this center will help influence children not to move to the city and to attract investors, mostly interested in real estate development, because the land here is a valuable resource and that could revitalize our community.”

*Fanica Secheleanu,
Mayor of Scanteia
Pilot Site, Iasi
County*



INTRODUCING THE GLOBAL LIBRARIES - ROMANIA PILOT SITES



IREX has worked in close collaboration with five county libraries and five local NGOs to identify the 13 pilot library Internet centers that will take part in the Global Libraries planning stage. By working with the selected pilot sites, IREX will gain insight into the issues related to locations of varying size and demographic characteristics in planning the a national program. The goal is to strategically implement projects under a variety of different conditions to develop a set of best practices that can be applied nationwide.

Meet the Pilot Sites:

Bucharest

Bucharest, the capital city of Romania, is located in the southern part of Romania and is the nation's largest city, and the industrial, economic, and academic center of Romania. The capital has 2 million officially registered inhabitants and close to an



additional 2 million people unofficially resident. Bucharest has a total of 34 public libraries. The Bucharest Metropolitan Library is a key partner in planning the national program.

Balotesti, in Ilfov County

Balotesti is a small community located 20 kilometers north of Bucharest, in Ilfov County and has a population of roughly 7,000 inhabitants. The area just north of Bucharest has been undergoing major development recently and will gradually transform from a rural area to a residential part of Bucharest.



The library in Balotesti is staffed by a single individual and is currently lacking access to computers.

Jilava, in Ilfov County

Jilava, also in Ilfov County, is located south of Bucharest, approximately 12 km from the city and 50 km from the border with Bulgaria. This town hosts a famous penitentiary, used by the former Communist regime to jail political dissidents. Jilava has a population of 9,300 inhabitants consisting of Romanians, Roma and Bulgarians. Jilava is over 300 years old.

The local public library lacks computers and through this project, will aim to engage with the large underserved Rom minority population of living in the community.

Tulcea/Tulcea County

Tulcea is a city in the Dobrogea region of Romania. It is the administrative center of Tulcea County, and has a population of 91,875. The economy of Tulcea includes the metal processing, building materials, ship construction, lumber processing, textile, and food industries. Tulcea has a large group of minorities living in the area, and it faces the challenge of poorly-developed infrastructure, including roads and telecom accessibility. Many residents have emigrated out of the region and the families left behind require better forms of communication.

Sulina, in Tulcea County

Sulina is located on the Black Sea coast on the edge of the Danube Delta in Tulcea County and is only accessible by boat. Residents can reach Tulcea, the county capital, on a daily



ferry boat. Sulina has 5,000 inhabitants. The community is completely removed from



the nation's transportation network, and the Russian speaking Lipoveni in the area are a significantly disadvantaged minority.

Iasi/Iasi County

Iasi is the capital of Iasi County and the traditional capital of Moldavia. Iasi has 350,000 inhabitants and a population fluctuation of 60,000 students annually. Iasi is the economic, cultural, and academic center of the Romanian region of Moldavia. Since many residents have emigrated to work abroad, many need new ways to stay in touch with their relatives. The Iasi public library system has experience with modern library science that may be transferred to communities throughout the county. Iasi County Library will place equipment in three branches, aiming to work with a range of currently underserved groups.

Belcesti, in Iasi County

Belcesti is one of the country's largest communes, with a population of 12,000 inhabitants distributed through six villages. Most of the residents of Belcesti work in agriculture and many live as subsistence

GLOBAL LIBRARIES - ROMANIA

PILOT SITES CONTINUED

farmers. Belcesti does not have access to modern technologies, is not currently served by broadband. In this large commune the local public library is served by a single librarian. In addition, the community is detached lacks connections to the public transportation system.

Scanteia, in Iasi County

Scanteia is a commune with 4,512 residents. Inhabitants rely on subsistence farming, or the residents find work in one of the nearby localities. Much like Belcesti, Scanteia does not have access to modern



technologies, and broadband currently does not reach the community. In this large commune the local public library is served by a single librarian.

Deva/Hunedoara County

Hunedoara, a county located in the western part of Romania, is a former mining area. Since the early 90s, there has been a significant drop in industrial production

resulting in a dramatic increase in unemployment in the region. Deva is the capital of Hunedoara County



and has a population of 70,000 inhabitants. The county library in Deva aims to address the community's challenges by providing its citizens access to valuable services such as online job training and access to labor markets. At present, none of the libraries in Deva maintains computers for the public nor access to Internet. Investments in the county can connect communities to the global economy and can generate opportunities for private sector involvement.

Baru, Hunedoara County

Baru is a commune located in Hunedoara County and has a population of 3,000 inhabitants. The commune has suffered during periods of economic reform over the past ten years. The closure of several mines and metal plants in the vicinity has contributed to skyrocketing unemployment and poverty in and around Baru. Many of Baru's citizens have migrated to Western Europe in search of employment opportunities. Unemployment is high and there is a large pool of children and teenagers that could benefit from the opportunity of free access to the Internet.

Zalau/Salaj County

Zalau is the capital of Salaj County and has nearly 63,000 inhabitants. The County Library in Zalau has updated its strategy thanks to the determination of the managerial team led by Director Florica Pop, who has worked to increase the number of clients by bringing library resources to schools, homes for the retired, clubs, hospitals, and businesses. Since 2002, the locally created NGO - "Prietenii bibliotecii" (Friends of the library) - has been raising funds for the library and advocating for the development of new services for library clients. Thanks to the new strategy, two local branches of the county library in Zalau were established: a branch for adults and one for the retired.

Bobota, in Salaj County

The commune of Bobota is a small historic agricultural community that has been in existence since the year 1213. Bobota is located in Salaj County and has 4,100 inhabitants of which nearly 15% are Roma. The community of Bobota has shown great interest in creating a public access Internet center. The library currently employs only a single librar-



ian.

Cehu Silvaniei, In Salaj County

Cehu Silvaniei, also in Salaj County, is located 34 kilometers away from Zalau. Of its 8,000 inhabitants roughly 50% are ethnic Hungarian. The residents of Cehu Silvaniei mainly work in agriculture. Cehu Silvaniei is a community with a significant linguistic minority.

FIRST STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING BRINGS TOGETHER NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS



On January 29, 2008, IREX and the Romanian government conducted the first Steering Committee meeting for Global Libraries – Romania. The meeting was held at the central government building and participants from government ministries and the National Association of Public Libraries and Librarians attended. Participants included representatives from the Prime Minister's office and its Public Policy unit, the Ministry of Culture and Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology, and the National Regulatory Authority for Communications and Information Technology (ANRCTI).

Points discussed at the meeting included:

- an update on the Global Libraries Romanian Planning grant and the

current state of the program

- the progress of and plans for pilot site grants
- the role of the steering committee in policy development
- The need for Steering Committee members to provide IREX with relevant information regarding the current state of connectivity as well as proposed investments in information and communications technology.
- The local branding of the GL program to best represent the Romanian context.

The meeting proved to be highly productive. The participants volunteered to provide IREX and the Global Libraries program with information regarding the current state of broadband

connectivity throughout Romania as well as to work with IREX in determining when and where future investments to the broadband infrastructure will be made. IREX will coordinate the information collection process while continuing to conduct meetings with line ministries individually. IREX plans follow-up meetings with the ANRCTI to gain insight as to the current state of connectivity in Romania.

Steering Committee members were excited about the possibility to rebrand the program by developing a program title that will resonate with Romanians throughout the county. During the meeting it was determined that IREX will collect and centralize all branding ideas and distribute them to all the Steering Committee members. A final decision on the program title will be made in March.

Though unable to participate, representatives from the Ministry of Health expressed their enthusiasm and promised to assign a representative to collaborate with IREX and to contribute in future Steering Committee meetings. ■

“Development means information and knowledge and the Global Libraries program represents a step towards the future.”

*Mr. Adrian Curaj,
State Councilor,
and representative
of the Romanian
Government*



DECEMBER 2007 CPC WINNERS INCLUDE LOCAL DATABASE AND LIBRARY VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Two grants were awarded for the December round of the Community Participation Contest. The communities of Simian in Bihor County and Saschiz in Mures County were announced as the winners of the December Community Contest on January 18, 2008.

The Simian commune project envisages the creation of a small nucleus of local volunteers to provide assistance to school children, residents, and tourists who aim to access information

via the Internet at the local public library. The project proposes the integration of community members with new information technology by providing a friendly and attentive volunteer service to all residents and visitors.

The second project, "Povesti Saschizene," or "Stories of Saschiz" will work towards creating a public library aimed at becoming the local informational, educational, and cultural hub for their community. They will create several local data bases to

provide citizens with easily accessible information regarding the availability of European and Romanian government grants as well as programs related to the development of small and medium sized businesses. The community will create a local website, <http://www.povestisaschizene.ro> which will provide a reflection of the community's vast cultural and historical background through stories expressed by local residents. ■

“ ‘Stories from Saschiz’ and the community counseling services are projects dear to our inhabitants, civil society, as well as employees of our local public administration, which by their nature are essential for the dissemination of information.”

*Florentina Calugar
Project Manager,
Saschiz Comune,
Winner of CPC*

BARU JOINS IN COMMUNITY OUT-REACH MEETING

IREX Advocacy and Training Specialist, Monica Grecu organized a community outreach meeting in the pilot center host Baru commune, located Hunedoara County. This small community consists of 3,000 inhabitants and is one of the 13 sites selected to participate in this year's Global Libraries planning stage. In an effort to involve community members and promote the library's new public Internet access center, to be , a community meeting was hosted at the Commune Hall. The mayor of Baru, Mr. Daniel Raducanu, worked with IREX and the local NGO partner Noi Orizonturi to organize a community meeting inviting community members, including the local librarian, school director, local priest, school children, local business owners, and two Peace Corps volunteers.

The purpose of the two-hour meeting was to gain insight into the specific local needs that Global Libraries Romania may be able to address by providing training and guidance through the program. The clearest result of the discussion was that Baru has been gravely affected by the economic changes that have taken place in Hunedoara County

resulting from the closure of several mines and the major downsizing of the local metal works factory. The factory, at its peak, employed 1,300 employees and today employs roughly 300 residents of Baru. These changes have resulted in the determination of a large percentage of young adults to choose to leave Baru for Western Europe in an effort to find employment and to send home earnings to aid family members left behind. Many of Baru's youth live in single-parent households or with grandparents due to the mass exodus of parents in search of a means to uphold their households.

IREX will work closely with the community of Baru to facilitate communication exchanges between separated family members through the newly established Internet center. Guidance will also be offered in aiding local residents seeking employment opportunities, looking for programs designed to aid small business owners such as business incubators, and European and Romanian grant opportunities for business development. ■

GLOBAL LIBRARIES – ROMANIA PLANS PROGRAM'S FIRST REGIONAL WORKSHOP IN FEBRUARY

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IREX is an international nonprofit organization providing leadership and innovative programs to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, and foster pluralistic civil society development. Founded in 1968, IREX works in more than 50 countries.

IREX, together with the Iasi County Council, Iasi County Library, and the Center for Mediation and Community Safety (CMSC) is preparing Global Libraries—Romania's first regional workshop to bring together librarians, local government representatives, and local NGOs from the 13 pilot site communities in an effort to gain insight into the lessons learned from the project proposal phase and the computer equipment procurement process. The regional workshop will take place the last week of February with the first session taking place at the Iasi County Council public meeting facility. Invitees will be asked to share their specific experiences in working with IREX and to relate possible improvements in future collaborations. Discussions will also focus on how IREX might best approach the issue of procuring equipment during the implementation of the national program. Par-



ticipants will also visit a local pilot site host to discuss the many issues related to the establishment of a public access Internet center within a small public library. Discussions related to space allocation for the computer labs, securing computer lab facilities, providing the public with a comfortable and welcoming setting and the financial implications on local budgets will give participants an opportunity through which to share ideas and jointly brainstorm solutions. The workshop aims to create a learning community among those participating in the first stage of the Global Libraries program, that will work together as the program evolves to solve common problems. ■

