

GLOBAL LIBRARIES ROMANIA

Monthly Newsletter

February 2008

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NEWS IN BRIEF

Global Libraries Regional Workshop Concludes in Iasi
IREX organized the first of three program-wide workshops in Iasi in February. The two-day event was the first of a series of knowledge sharing events to take place over the course of the one-year planning grant. The event allowed participants to learn from each other's experience about the program's initial activities and make plans for the future.

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Winner of Monthly CPC
"The Right to Stories", proposed by the CCD Library in Neamt County, was selected as the winner of the January Community Participation Contest. This project addresses a problem unique to Neamt County where roughly 12,000 children have at least one parent working abroad. It aims to



teach youth about their rights by using selected stories containing examples which will be rewritten and illustrated by teams of children.

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ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:
Community Outreach Underway Across Program Pilot Sites

Libraries in Iasi and Salaj have been reaching out to

their communities to learn about local expectations for the Internet centers and how centers can meet them. Through a series of public meetings, community members have called upon Internet centers to play a role in addressing local needs from health and agriculture to job placement assistance and access to government benefits.

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Global Libraries Initiative

 **BIBLIOTECA.RO**



BIBLIOTECA.RO BLOG LAUNCHES

The blog section of Biblioteca.ro provides regular update with staff perspectives on program progress, events and activities. The section aims to share ideas and solicit feedback about approaches to different

challenges. This month, Washington DC program coordinator Shannon Hill visited Romania to help coordinate the program's first Regional Workshop. Shannon reflects on her experiences in Romania and pro-

vides insight into the working life and culture of Romania. Shannon has chosen some of her favorite photos with comments on the blog and shares thoughts on her visit to Iasi and Bucharest. ■

STAKEHOLDERS GATHER AT FIRST PROGRAM ROUNDTABLE TO SHARE EXPERIENCE, CONCERNS

On February 28 and 29, 54 representatives of Global Libraries – Romania pilot sites came together in Iasi to learn from each other's experience about the program's initial activities and make plans for the future. The workshop was organized by IREX in close cooperation with Iasi's Gheorghe Asachi County Library, the Iasi County Council, and NGO partner, the Center for Mediation and Social Security. It was the first of three times that participants will gather in order to document program progress and exchange lessons learned.

Attendees included librarians, local NGO representatives, county and local government officials, Global Libraries Steering Committee members, and IREX Global Libraries staff. Participants aimed to capture experience to date in an effort to apply relevant lessons to the program's country roll-out strategy. Discussion topics included the process for establishing the library pilot site centers, collaboration between NGOs and libraries, procurement, local government cost-share, and facilitating communication

between all stakeholders.

Workshop participants debated:

Equipment procurement. Participants agreed that there is no single best solution that can be applied universally. Through the 13 sites, IREX is currently experimenting with a range of procurement mechanisms, including procurement through a library-affiliated NGO, a county library, local governments and a county government. Primary debate centered around whether procurement should be conducted at the local level or centrally.

Local co-funding. Dialogue focused around the question of which public institution is most appropriate to take responsibility for providing the cost share to meet program goals. Cost share is defined as the public cost for sustaining the program including the cost of furniture, internet subscription, librarian salaries, purchasing software programs of public interest,



and maintaining the equipment and library facilities. The majority of participants agreed that cost share should come from local government revenues and through the local budget cycle that should be assumed by the government and committed annually for the library support.

Pilot site setup. Participants found that a partnership formula linking librarians, the NGO sector and local government was essential for a successful center launch. These partnerships aid small libraries, especially those from communes, foster a sense of inclusion with their commu-

nities when opening and operating centers. The need to simplify the application process was also discussed, as some noted that the pilot grant process was difficult to complete.

The workshop also exposed participants to content demonstrations displaying the online capabilities offered by a series of Iasi county public services and local private sector initiatives. The Iasi Department for Agriculture and Rural Development provided an online overview of the latest EU funding opportunities in their sector. The county police inspectorate demonstrated their online services and forms and updates on the many community projects currently being implemented by the local police force. XL World Romania, a private online job search provider highlighted examples related to employment opportunities from throughout the county.

Librarian Dragos Olaru

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"It was a real pleasure to work alongside the IREX team, to discover your level of professionalism, and to have met such a rarely found group of people. We congratulate you for all your efforts and admire the work environment created by your team during the workshop, it was clear, concrete, and to the point and as a result we would like to assure you that we will respond promptly to all your needs."

Mrs. Florica Pop, Salaj County Library Director

NEAMT COUNTY YOUTH RIGHTS PROJECT WINNER OF FEBRUARY COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION CONTEST



On February 19th, "The right to stories" project, proposed by the CCD Library in Neamt County, was selected as the winner of the January Community Participation Contest by an evaluation panel composed of IREX staff including Alexandra Bucur and Anca Rapeanu, NGO representative Laura Albu, the executive president of Community Safety and Mediation Center, Iasi, and Robert Coravu, the deputy director of the Central University Library in Bucharest.

"The right to stories" is a project that addresses a specific local problem unique to Neamt County where roughly 12,000 children have at least one if not both parents working abroad. Under such circumstances several societal issues including the increased potential for child exploitation and an increase in violent behavior as a result of insufficient guidance from parents have already surfaced.

This unique project aims to teach youth about their rights by using selected stories containing both positive and negative examples, which will be rewritten and illustrated by teams of children. A total of 250 school children from four schools will be placed in teams to work on ten specific stories. This will be an exercise in team-work and creative thinking and will increase the level of awareness of children regarding their rights. All created content will be posted online at www.ccdneamt.ro and will be available as a teaching or information resource for children throughout the country. Upon notification, Ana Macovei, the librarian for CCD Neamt County, stated "In order to begin the implementation of the project we have already established the necessary contacts with each of the schools involved and will soon create a detailed plan of activities.

Of the 18 projects received for the January Community Participation Contest, six

others were shortlisted:

"A chance for everyone" aimed at promoting services and activities at the Documentation and Information Center in Buzias, Timis County, through a newly created webpage, www.cdibuzias2007.ro and organization of courses in information and documentation techniques.

The Documentation and Information Centers are mixed structures, located in Romanian schools, but available to general public also. As they are new structures, the community is not well aware of the range of services they can benefit from.

"Prundeni - knowledge based development" was to create a common electronic Internet portal for accessing content relevant to the community including local authorities, local cultural agenda, statistics, and cultural heritage. Prundeni Commune, Valcea County.

"I want to know, I want to navigate" from the "Ion Barbu" Municipal library in Campulung Muscel, Arges County, proposed the promotion of Internet usage as an instrument for information gathering and continuous education. The two main components were education with new media, using dedicated learning software for children, and Internet content demonstrations for adults.

"The castle of magical books - virtual library" proposed to create a website with a short multimedia

"We thank you for giving us this opportunity through this wonderful initiative, and for contributing to help us in achieving this project so close to our hearts!"

*Ms. Ana Macovei,
librarian for CCD
Neamt County*

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SALAJ AND IASI COUNTY LIBRARIES ENGAGE COMMUNITIES IN PLANNING FOR SITES

"I am very happy and confident that my community will benefit from the free access to the Internet, both the children and their parents, as well as our librarians and the groups of unemployed and disabled. This is a chance we don't want to miss."

*Vasile Cuceu,
Mayor of Cehu
Silvaniei*

Participants in the pilot stage of the Global Libraries program are reaching out to community members in new ways in preparation for the opening of their new Internet centers. As the opening dates for the centers approach, librarians are joining in community meetings with local government, citizen groups and library users to plan how centers can most effectively meet the needs of their communities.

During visits to Salaj and Iasi counties in February, IREX staff participated in this process and gained insight into the many diverse ways communities are planning on using the Internet centers to address local demands. Through these public gatherings, both program staff and librarians collected input from key stakeholders which will inform the program's development and its focus on users' expectations.

- In Cehu Silvaniei, local youth are in need of career orientation before entrance into universities or other educational institutions. Community meeting participants argued that the national school curriculum doesn't adequately address local employers' needs, and they are looking forward to the resources of the Internet to help fill this gap. The community also showed concern regarding issues related to the elderly and disabled. Medical services are scarce and there is a general lack of health

information available. Mayor Vasile Cuceu remarked, "I am very happy and confident that my community will benefit from the free access to the Internet, both the children and their parents, as well as our librarians and the groups of unemployed and disabled. This is a chance we don't want to miss."

to provide a better link to the community about updated laws and interpretations.

- In Salaj, senior citizens expressed enthusiasm for linking into new sources of information and communication, including updated news and medical information. The Internet center will be based in the county library's special



- In Bobota, the needs of the Roma community took precedence at the meeting. Many are currently unemployed after the local coal mine shut down. Roma representatives at the meeting expressed an interest in accessing legal information on the Internet and developing better communications with government services. The community police agent at the meeting has found that rapidly changing legislation is difficult to understand for many community members. He shared a

branch devoted to senior citizens.

- In Belcesti, where more than one-quarter of the 11,000 residents are currently living abroad, citizens expressed their need for better communication between children and parents separated by great distances. Migration has resulted in other difficulties for the community, as very few people are available to fill local job vacancies. Community members are hoping the Internet center will provide access to

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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.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION CONTEST CONTINUED

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presentation of selected works of literature and a web-forum to generate interactive discussions. This school library is located in the city of Iasi.

“Friendship, creativity, traditions” proposed to facilitate the access to culture for school children by organizing extra-curricular activities: film projections on Saturdays, painting contests, music auditions in the Independenta Commune library, **Galați** County, as well as creative writing sessions and a local journalism club.

“Equal chances for all” is a proposal from the Ghidigeni, Comuna Ghidiceni commune library, **Galați** County. This project envisages the library as the host and organizer of community education meetings on critical topics such as health, vocational education, professional counseling and the creation of information brochures for different domains of interest for the community, with a special emphasis on the local Roma community. ■

REGIONAL WORKSHOP CONTINUED

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stated that “the content demonstrations reminded me of what a math teacher once told me; it is less important to discover a grain of rice than it is to learn to grow rice. The experiences presented, the demonstrations by various specialists, and the means by which to access information via the Internet was, in my opinion, relevant for all librarians and provided a wonderful il-

lustration of what their future mission in their communities should become.”

The workshop concluded with a sense of community among planning stage program participants and a foundation for further discussion and debate. Participants will join again later this spring to review the process of opening centers, which will take place in March and April. ■

SALAJ AND IASI COMMUNITY MEETINGS CONTINUED

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better professional development opportunities and build up support to the local economy.

- In Scanteia, phone service is currently poor and residents in this rural community are looking to the Internet center to provide better access to information about agriculture, including farming subsidies and EU funds for agricultural development. The town’s doctor expressed her concerns regarding access to reproductive health information for children and adolescents, as well as the latest news about subsidized medications – something currently not available reliably locally.

By collecting this information from participating pilot sites through a series of public meetings, IREX will be able to better align program priorities to meet the expectations of stakeholders and help libraries develop a system for planning to effectively service community needs. ■

