

GLOBAL LIBRARIES ROMANIA

Monthly Newsletter

March 2008

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IT TRAINING FOR PILOT SITE LIBRARIANS ENHANCES CAPACITY TO SERVE VISITORS

Global Libraries Romania organized the first two of the three planned office and Internet applications training for 17 librarians from 10 of the 13 pilot sites. Conducted in Bucharest and Zalau, during the week of March 17-21, the training was designed for beginners and intermediate level participants. Participants received 40 hours of basic computer skills development including data processing, spreadsheets, PowerPoint presentations, working with Internet applications such as browsers, search engines, e-mail, chat, and forum discussions.

As a result of prior training sessions, IREX had learned about several obstacles faced by librarians.



Librarians in smaller communities have difficulty leaving their homes for more than a couple of days due to family obligations. The purpose of having the training sessions in three locations was to determine if closer training proximity and the possibility for trainees to commute would increase participation. These adjust-

ments to the training have demonstrated an increase in participation from 80% initially to 100% of invited librarians attending the IT training.

For many of the participating librarians this was the first formal course in information technology. Mr. Ca-

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Global Libraries Initiative

 **BIBLIOTECA.RO**



USERS OF BIBLIOTECA.RO INCREASE

Statistics from the Global Libraries website Biblioteca.ro have shown that the level of registered users have increased along with the number of visitors coming to the site. The website is the central platform in which stakeholders including community leaders, li-

brarians, and the entire community can access to obtain relevant information, share ideas, and network with each other on various topics related to the program objectives. As of March, the website has over 105 registered members with over 500 monthly visi-

tors coming to the website. As the Global Libraries planning phase continues to be implemented, the website provides useful data that will help the program improve its services and be a central point of information sharing and knowledge building. ■

DISCOVERING SULINA'S NEEDS: COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS IDENTIFY SITE PRIORITIES



Once a major port and seat of the Danube Commission, Sulina is today mostly known as a tourist destination, providing a quieter and less commercial alternative to the busy resorts of Romania's southern coast. Sulina is an isolated town – the only way to reach it is by water, either along the Danube or by sea, a fact that increases the difficulties faced by many residents, who become disconnected from Romanian society at large.

Sulina's limited economy and restricted access mean that the town faces numerous challenges as it adapts to changing conditions. As one of the 13 sites chosen for the Global Libraries pilot phase, Sulina presents a range of opportunities for exploring how a library Internet center can play a role in meeting local needs in a unique environment where communications are so vital to existence.

In order to get a better sense of community needs,

librarians Ilinca Mihaila and Antoaneta Maxim worked together with Vox Deltae NGO president Dragos Olaru and mayor Aurel Dimitriu to bring together 22 community representatives for a discussion of community problems and the potential for the Internet to address them.

From this discussion, the librarians learned that tourism takes precedence among community members' concerns. Many in the community rely on income from tourists, especially during the summer when crowds arrive to take advantage of seaside facilities. Questions raised by the discussion group included:

- How can we promote and make better use of our natural resources?
- Who can restore historical monuments of which many are in disrepair?
- Where can we find courses and professional development opportunities in tourism-related fields.

- What documents does one need in order to get a tourism license and open a guesthouse?

"It takes one day to go by the regular boat ("Pasagerul") to Tulcea and back, just to deliver a piece of paper", one of the participants said in a response to a question about how she can effectively utilize her time. "I would give anything to be able to download forms, print them and send them to the authorities, without any hassle."

Living in this maritime environment without access to up-to-date information adds to the difficulties and inconveniences faced by residents. For example, environmental factors contribute to high frequencies of arthritis and rheumatism among pensioners. At the meeting, residents shared how this condition would shape their use of the new library Internet center. "I need to know if there are doctors who can give some advice online, or where I can go for health treatment," said Maria Popa, a pensioner who came to the meeting. A local nurse added, "People want more information about specific diseases in order to prevent them, and we don't have an organized channel of information. But, if they go to the library, the librarian can show them where to look for what they need."

Community dialogue was initiated through the discus-

sion, and awareness generated about the benefits of the Internet center. Librarians are enthusiastic about the benefits public access Internet will bring to the library and the community, and about their increased potential to be an information resource point. When the center opens, there will be many lessons to be learned about how new information sources can support community needs. ■

"I need to know if there are doctors who can give some advice online, or where to go for health treatment."

*Ms. Maria Popa,
Pensioner*

“RADIO LIBRARY” WINNER OF THE FEBRUARY COMMUNITY CONTEST

On March 20th, “BibliotecaRadio – www.bibliotecaradio.ro” (“Radio Library”), proposed by the “Octavian Goga” County Library in Cluj, was selected as the winner of the February Community Participation Contest.

The evaluation panel was composed of IREX staff including Alexandra Bucur and Anca Râpeanu, Ms. Iuliana Harja, from New Horizons Foundation Lupeni, Hunedoara county, and Mr. Robert Coravu, the deputy director of the Central University Library in Bucharest, serving as a library representative.

“BibliotecaRadio –

www.bibliotecaradio.ro” is a project which will demonstrate how the libraries can overcome physical barriers, and make effective use of new technologies to bring new interactive services to users and non-users.

The idea of the project is to create an online radio station, with a strong emphasis on encouraging cultural revitalization and information of the community. The online radio station will provide cultural local news and will offer information about all events and activities which are relevant for the community. The librarians will work together with volunteers from outside the library

such as library users, journalists and future journalists, writers and musicians, central and local government representatives, local university professors and business persons.

The project also represents an opportunity for the library to promote its services, and to encourage and disseminate good practices in the libraries throughout the country. The project will be a channel for promoting Romanian culture, especially serving the numerous Romanians working abroad who want to stay in touch with the cultural life back home. ■



“Through this project we will encourage and disseminate good practices from Romanian libraries, we will stimulate involvement of the community in using the new technologies and increase our support for developing local information centers through Internet resources in Romanian libraries.”

*Ms. Doina Popa
Director of “Octavian Goga” County Library in Cluj”*

ADVOCACY: STRATEGIZING TO PROMOTE INTERNET AT LIBRARIES

It takes a comprehensive effort to plan, tune, and design an advocacy and outreach strategy. IREX together with each of the 13 pilot site communities is working to develop advocacy strategies relevant to those libraries and residents that will promote the development of sustainable library services.

Over the next three months, selected community NGOs will work closely with each community in determining their informational needs and will arrange online content in a manner accessible to all library patrons. These

first steps in reaching out to communities are a key component of the Global Libraries – Romania program and the skills gained through the process will help libraries become sustainable and enable librarians to continually develop services for their respective communities.

At the same time, there have already been concrete advocacy successes that will serve as models for the country. Inspired by the program, a team of librarians from the Iasi County Library persuaded library management of the impor-

tance of establishing financing an additional Internet center in another library branch. The librarian team also advocated for the additional funds necessary to hire one more librarian to administer this new center. The Iasi County Library and two of its branches are Global Libraries partners in this pilot year, but this has not limited their desire to equip each of their seven branches. IREX discovered that librarians can become a vehicle for advocacy and networking long before receiving formal training.

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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.

IT TRAINING (CONTINUED)

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tanoiu, from the Tulcea County library, stated on the last day of instruction that “the computer is now my friend.”

The training provider for the group in Bucharest was the Center for Professional Training in Culture, a training institute under the Ministry of Culture. In Zalau, the EOS Foundation – Educating for an Open Society – provided pilot site librarians with training. Prior to course delivery, IREX

worked with both training providers to standardize a pre-course participant assessment, in an effort to determine their level of computer knowledge and to provide the level of training reflective of their needs.

In conducting IT training with optimal group sizes ranging from 10–12 participants per training session, Global Libraries expects librarians to be able to provide basic guidance for library patrons. When library users feel the need to ask questions of guidance – for example related to creating an

email address or communicating with family through Skype – librarians who have undergone this training now have the capacity to provide such direction. Librarians now have basic MS Word and Excel skills that will both enhance their day-to-day library operations and given them the ability to transfer these skills as needed to members of their communities. ■

ADVOCACY (CONT'D)

(Continued from page 3)

This initiative sends a message that when equipped with the hardware necessary to provide patrons with a new service, librarians can become empowered to push locally for more expanded services, the necessary staff, and continued cost-share.

Several pilot site communities have demonstrated their desire to build on the investments made by Global Libraries Romania, in Sulina, and Tulcea County. The local

government has agreed to hire an extra librarian to guarantee increased levels of service delivery. Similarly, Hunedoara County library decided to hire an extra librarian to manage the new library Internet center. Several communities have asked if they can purchase extra computers from their own resources to meet the expected local demand. In each case, communities have responded with enthusiasm to the new resources and have begun to build on them based on their own initiative. ■

