

GLOBAL LIBRARIES ROMANIA

Monthly Newsletter

May 2008

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NATIONAL LIBRARIANS' CONFERENCE PROVIDES OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN PARTNERSHIP

From April 16-18 in Baile Felix, Romania, Global Libraries program staff Alexandra Bucur, Ecaterina Vasile, and Marcel Chiranov participated in the semi-annual conference of the National Association of Libraries and Librarians in Romania (ANBPR), connecting with the library community in order to promote and plan for involvement in upcoming program activities.

The conference brought together more than 100 county and local library representatives, including association president Doina Popa, who addressed the attendees urging them to take an active role in the program. Ms. Popa envisioned a dynamic role for the association in implementing the program, and one that grows over time as part of the program's approach to long-term sustainability.

Staff members Bucur, Vasile and Chiranov shared with conference attendees IREX's vision for the Global Libraries program and the role of librarians. They discussed the evolution of the 13 pilot sites, focusing particularly on how the centers



help in building both librarian and library user capacity and how centers are geared towards fostering community engagement. Both the ANBPR leadership and association members responded with enthusiasm, recognizing the program as an opportunity for their libraries, colleagues, and patrons to gain access to information through the Internet as well as improve their technology skills.

Through this conference, IREX and the ANBPR began to develop a plan for building the association's capacity, strengthening the organization as a partner for the program. The ANBPR made recommendations for training and

management assistance that IREX could provide. As a result, the association has assembled a team of nine volunteers who will work closely with Chiranov to expand upon a capacity development plan.

The ANBPR is one of the program's key partners, and this conference helped identify ways to intensify their involvement and help build up a foundation for collaboration. ■

PILOT SITE PROFILES

As GL pilot sites open, IREX looks at how librarians view their new resource.

Salaj County

Salaj County Library "I.S. Badescu"

Zalau

Population: 63,000

Branches in the project (2): Retired persons, Adults

"People are curious and eager to start working on the computers in the Internet center. We have courses for beginners scheduled next month, and already the demand for it is twice as great as the available positions. Another plus is that librarians are now seen in a different light, and no longer associated with books only."

-Ms. Alina Paina, Librarian

Cehu Silvaniei Public Library

Population: 8,000

"The municipality supported us a lot. They paid for refurbishments and new furniture for the center. There will be many benefits for our community. I've met other librarians and started to feel part of this network, where we learn so much every day."

-Mrs. Iuliana Balint, Librarian

Bobota Public Library

Population: 4,000

"High school students have come and asked if they can be volunteers in the Internet center. I was thrilled about this, because they will be able to help their younger colleagues and anybody else who wants to use these services."

-Mrs. Rosan Mariana, Librarian

Hunedoara County

Hunedoara County Library "Ovid Densusianu"

Deva

Population: 69,000

"The Internet center is a motivation for librarians to keep themselves informed about the latest developments and learn continuously. We expect that the young people will volunteer to help those who may need their support, especially senior citizens."

-Mrs. Gabriela Marcu, County Library Director

Baru Public Library

Population: 3,000

"I think this center is going to be a big opportunity for local development, because many people need jobs, or to find a market for their products or more information about rural tourism. I'm planning to organize courses for people above 40, and give them a certificate to help them find jobs more easily."

-Mrs. Narcisa Sorescu, Librarian

Iasi County

Library "Gh.Asachi"

Iasi

Population: 315,000

Branches in the project (3): Tatarasi Ateneu, Nicolina V. Alecsandri, Adults

"Professionally, this program is a challenge for me, because all of it is so new, I haven't been exposed to so much knowledge in a long time. I'm also expecting many young people to come to the Internet center who will also be inspired to look for more information."

-Mrs. Mihaela Morariu, Librarian, Tatarasi Ateneu branch

Belcesti Public Library

Population: 11,300

"I haven't learnt so much in 15 years of library work. Everybody in the community is eager to use the Internet center and we will also have volunteers, teachers from other villages."

-Mr. Corneliu Popescu, Librarian

Scanteia Public Library

Population: 4,500

"We don't have Internet access in the community, so many people ask when the center will open. As for myself, I'm proud to be part of this program, though a little nervous about the extra work."

-Mrs. Lenuta Baltag, Librarian

Iasi Association for the Visually Impaired

Serves 4,000 persons in 3 counties: Iasi, Vaslui and Botosani

"Our members are very excited that they received help from the project. We are building a new recording studio which is supposed to employ our members, and everybody wants to 'see' it with their hands. Our wish is to support our members to be better included, and computers and communication make our job a lot easier."

-Mrs. Onet Radita, Association Librarian

Tulcea County

Tulcea County Library "Panait Cerna"

Tulcea

Population: 92,000

"The Internet center will lead to an increased impact of the library institution on the community and will enforce the capacity of the public library to address citizens' interests."

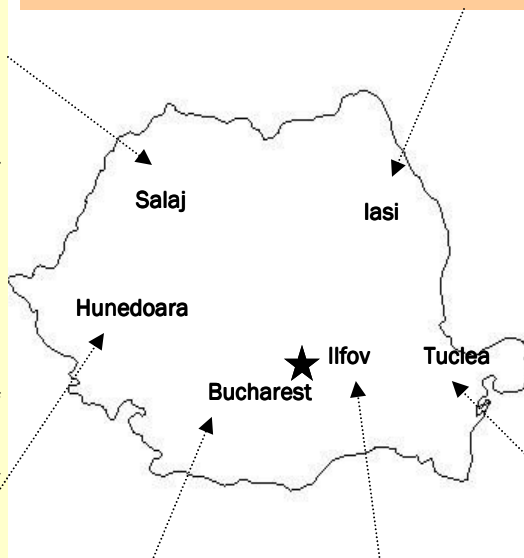
-Ms. Postolache Delia, Library Director

Sulina Public Library

Population: 4,600

"This center is essential for our community, because many people can't even afford to have phones and they need to keep in touch with their families. Sulina is an isolated community, where people find it difficult to keep up-to-date and don't have many opportunities."

-Mrs. Ilinca Mihaila, Librarian



Bucharest

Bucuresti Metropolitan Library

Bucharest

Population: 1,930,000

"We are already used to providing alternative services, but we expect to be able to provide better and more comprehensive support for our users. There are many clients who wouldn't have had any space in this center up to now; we have been very crowded, so everybody is ready for this new opportunity."

-Mrs. Gabriela Teodorescu, Librarian

Ifov County

Jilava Public Library

Population: 12,000

"Since we are located in the high school courtyard we expect a lot of pupils to come to the library center. They keep asking when it will be opened."

-Mrs. Madalina Chiriaci

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION CONTEST WINNER

TEPU PUBLIC LIBRARY PLANS CAREER AND EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

On April 18th Tepu Public Library's submission for the March Community Participation Contest (CPC) was selected as the month's winner. Their project, entitled "The Library as a Center for Information, School and Career Counseling – Gates Opened to the Future" aims to create an educational and career counseling resource center at the library.

Through the project, the library will use its new equipment to create a data-

base of information on educational opportunities in Galati County. The goal of the project is to empower community youth, assist them in career development, and familiarize them with educational opportunities and alternatives.

Visitors to the library, including students, parents, teachers, local authorities and private sector representatives, will be able to access career development resources including resumes and cover letter tem-

plates at the center. From these materials, librarians will create and update tailored information packets addressing local needs.

As part of the project, the library will also organize workshops in cooperation with the Center for Psycho-Pedagogical Assistance of Galați County and the Agency for Labor Occupation, in order to facilitate cooperation and dialogue among local institutions serving youth. ■

"This was an important challenge for us; we know it's a long way from what's said to what needs to be done, but our team is committed to help this community. Through this project, we intend to turn our library into a real information center and use the database to help students and marginalized groups have a better chance."

*Gina Obreja,
Librarian, Tepu,
Galati county – winner
of CPC for March*

WEBSITE TO PROMOTE CULTURAL HERITAGE LAUNCHES IN JURILOVCA

On April 29, the winner of December's CPC launched its project website, www.bibliotecajurilovca.ro. The site was created by the Center for Promoting Local Culture and Traditions (CLIO) - a partnership between the Jurilovca library and the local World Bank-funded Point of Access to Public Information.

The project utilizes information and communication technology to preserve and promote the community's cultural heritage by increasing access to books and other documents related to the local ethnic Russian community.

The website launch was intentionally planned for the

Easter period as Easter is one of the unique community's most important religious celebrations. Located on the border of the Razim-Sinoe Lagoon in Romania's Danube Delta, the village of Jurilovca was established at the end of the 18th century by Russians fleeing persecution for opposing Russian Orthodox Church reforms. Today 2,800 of Jurilovca's 3,200 residents are Russian-speaking Lipovani, descendants of the Staroveri or "Old Believers".

Jurilovca is also the biggest community of fishermen in Romania, and a departure point for tourists exploring the delta and local attractions, such as the ancient Greek fortress of Orgamum.

For the project, community members donated books and other documents, which were digitized and posted to the webpage. A team of experts from various fields compiled, researched, and organized the materials. "People in Jurilovca used to keep their treasured religious books hidden in the 'dowry chest.' They say if you sell these, you sell God!" commented historian and Staroveri expert Alec-sandr Varona. "This project offered them the opportunity to show old books and pictures to the world and make themselves better known," Varona continued.

The team consists of history professor and manager of

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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.

CULTURAL HERITAGE (CONTINUED)

(Continued from page 3)

the Local Community Electronic Network Paul Condrat, librarian Gheorghita Cuțopal, as well as other community members whose passion for ancient relics has been one of the engines of this project. "I grew up among these ruins, with the history and religion of my people in my heart," explained Paul Condrat. "Now we can share all of this, and we can welcome the world to the Staroveri way of life." ■

ASSOCIATION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED DEFINES NEEDS AND PREPARES FOR INTERNET CENTER OPENING

The Iasi Association for the Visually Impaired, a branch of the National Association for the Visually Impaired, was selected as one of the 13 Global Libraries - Romania Program pilot sites. The selection followed a meeting at which the 30 association members expressed their needs for and expectations of an Internet center, and the rapid completion of the grants application process due to the immediate need.

Through the center, IREX aims to gauge the possibility of opening sites at alternative institutions that serve similar purposes to libraries. Recognizing their members' urgent need for computer and Internet access, the association worked to com-

pleted the Global Libraries - Romania grant application and equipment purchase process quickly. Currently, the members are waiting for the installation of software in order to open the Internet center.

At the meeting, association members expressed the need for voice recognition software at the center, in order to access and connect to other computers and utilize Internet functions and capabilities. These capabilities include email, search engines, online music, chat, and radio broadcasts. "My daughter lives in the US and I could talk to her every night [using a computer]," commented one association member.

Visually impaired students will be able to access coursework materials and complete assignments independently by scanning materials that are then read aloud through speakers. In the past, students were dependent on volunteer readers' schedules with whom they made appointments. Now students may study on their own schedule without having to rely on volunteers. "For the visually impaired, computers are as important as walking canes," commented sports academy student Florentiu.

Even though some of the association members have computers at home, members will benefit from computer training at the center as well as opportunities to exchange ideas, and help others who are only starting to adapt to the new technology. Librarians Radita Onet of the association and Irena Brodoceanu from the Iasi County Library, whose enthusiasm and dedication was instrumental in the development of the Internet center, will continue to support and coordinate the center's events and services. ■

