

GLOBAL LIBRARIES ROMANIA

Monthly Newsletter

June 2008

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ZALAU PILOT SITE OPENS TO HIGH DEMAND, HELPS SENIORS WITH NEW SKILLS

After attending courses at the free public access Internet center which opened May 8 at the Branch for Pensioners of the Zalau County Library, the center's visitors are reading online newspapers, corresponding by e-mail with their children abroad, and downloading photographs sent by family and friends. The Internet center for pensioners—one of four Global Libraries pilot sites in Salaj County—was the first of the program's 13 pilot sites nationwide to open.

The Internet center is hosted by the city's public library branch within the Zalau Center for Mutual Assistance (CARP), which has a county-wide membership of 9,000. The center is equipped with five computers, which each include webcams and microphones. Librarians at the club were ready to help users become comfortable using computers and the Internet after participating in Global Libraries training on customer service, information technology, and Internet center management.

Only eight days after the opening of the Internet center—from May 14 to 19—the first group of 24 pensioners



Pensioners learning how to use the computers

to receive training opened e-mail accounts, practiced communicating by e-mail, and learned to use search

“Now I know how to look for diet recipes online. I can look for newspapers or any information I need.”

tools on the Internet. In an e-mail message sent to the librarian who conducted the course, new center user Ileana Primarita says, “Now I know how to look for diet recipes online. I can look for newspapers or

any information I need.”

Most of the visitors came to the classes with the primary purpose of learning to write and send messages to children living abroad. “It is so good I can write to my children and grandchildren,” commented Primarita, a pensioner living in Zalau. Other course participants already had plans to use their skills in order to stay in touch with the library while traveling abroad. “For the moment I am writing you from Romania, but when I arrive in France I will write you what I have seen there,” wrote Ela Zaraza following the course.

The demand for courses at

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SULINA PILOT SITE “BIBLIONET” OPENS, PROVIDES COMMUNITY WITH NEW RESOURCES



Sulina's busy Internet center located at the Sulina Public Library

On May 30, the Sulina Public Library in Tulcea County opened their free public access Internet center, a pilot site of the Global Libraries—Romania program. The Jean Bart Public Library in Sulina is determined to provide new services for the community through the center—named “Biblionet”—including basic computer courses, web research and bibliographies,

and specialized information packages in areas of interest to local residents. Two high school students will volunteer at the center to help visitors search for information online. The May 30 opening ceremony was attended by about 40 community members, all eager to make use of the new equipment.

Librarian Ilinca Mihaila is especially eager to extend

the reach of the library further into the community. “The library should not merely observe what is going on in the community, but be a living and active part of it,” commented Mihaila. “This is why librarians have to leave their comfortable place behind the desk and make themselves visible, work with the community in order to help users. The Internet helps them in this respect.”

Sulina Mayor Aurel Dimitriu has been an enthusiastic supporter of the effort to bring Internet resources to the library. Since the commune and town libraries are directly subordinate to the municipal government, local government commitment is critical for developing and launching library-based Internet centers. In addition to providing the center's required connectivity costs and renovating and furnish-

ing the center space, Dimitriu elected to hire an additional librarian in order to meet patrons' needs at the expanded library. “Sulina knows about the Internet. There are three

“The library should not merely observe what is going on in the community, but be a living and active part of it.”

providers in town and about 500 subscribers,” commented Dimitriu. “But Sulina has 1600 families and many of them cannot afford to have Internet at home. For them, for tourists, and for all those who need support in finding information we have opened this center.” ■

NATIONAL SURVEYS SHOW STRONG DEMAND, SUPPORT FOR FREE PUBLIC ACCESS INTERNET CENTERS

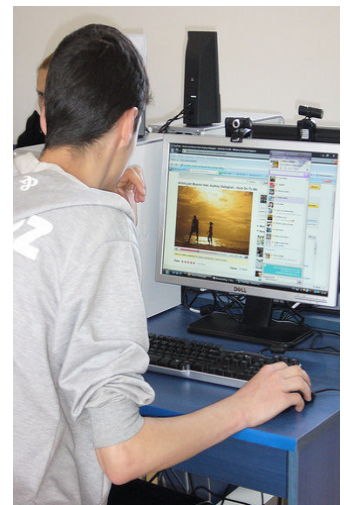
The initial results of three national surveys indicate an overwhelming interest in and readiness for free public access Internet centers in Romania. There is substantial potential for expanding the Global Libraries – Romania program since 2,360 localities (85.6% of the country's local governments) expressed interest in hosting a free public access Internet center in their community, and nearly half meet all of the eligibility

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criteria which will be required for applying to the Global Libraries program at

the national stage.

From March 25 to April 15 the Center for Urban and Rural Sociology (CURS) conducted three national surveys assessing library capacity and citizens' information needs, the results of which will inform the Global Libraries program plan to extend public access Internet centers to libraries nationwide. There are currently 13 Internet center pilot sites in Romania. In order to ap-



Computer user surfs the Internet

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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION CONTEST WINNER: VRANCEA TO INCREASE AWARENESS OF BULLYING COMBINING INTERNET AND MEDIA

“Through this project we have the opportunity to promote and improve the services of our library, and we will encourage the involvement of the community in using the new technologies. We will apply this knowledge in helping children to cope with this phenomenon [bullying] that is met so often in the schools lately. If you know how to use technology you can actually make a difference!”

*Liliana Mocanu,
Librarian, CPC
Winner*

Emerging as the most compelling from a pool of 15 strong applications, the South District Branch of the Vrancea County Library was selected as the winner of the April Community Participation Contest (CPC) with their proposal for “The Neighborhood Library - Space for Community Education,” the goal of which is to increase awareness of bullying in city schools in Focsani and to find ways to support pupils confronting this problem.

The program consists of several complementary parts: librarians and three other volunteers will work with 30 local schoolchildren from two schools in Focsani to locate, select, and translate information on bullying into Romanian, which they will place on the library’s web page. In addition to compiling and posting the information, the library also intends to increase awareness of bullying in the community by utilizing local media. Radio DADA, a local radio show, will host a

weekly debate on the topic of bullying.

Librarians see this as the first of many such projects. “I want to add that this project only represents the first step for our community – our next activities will address the older population in the community, and those that are disadvantaged, for different reasons,” commented Liliana Mocanu, librarian at the Duiuiu Zamfirescu branch of the Vrancea County Library. ■

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION CONTEST PROLONGED DUE TO HIGH PARTICIPATION

IREX is pleased to announce the prolongation of the Community Participation Contest (CPC) until __, Due to the popularity and success of the monthly CPC, eliciting 78 applications over the first six months, it will continue for six more months past the original end date in April. In this article, we look back at initiative’s achievements to date.

Launched last November within the Global Libraries—Romania program, the goal of the CPC is to encourage the development of online content and creative community outreach ideas,

while expanding the program’s reach beyond the 13 pilot sites. The projects identify and address community needs and provide other libraries with inspiration for programming ideas in their own communities. CPC winners receive small grants of up to 2,500 USD to implement the proposed projects.

Every month a review panel

composed of IREX staff, NGO representatives and librarians evaluates the proposed projects on the basis of criteria including originality, ease of replication, and degree of community involvement. In order to ensure transparency in the evaluation process, the review panel discusses the proposals and determines the winners on a Global Li-

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-  Biblioteca publica comuna
Proiect propus
-  Biblioteca publica comuna
Proiect castigator
-  Biblioteca scolara
Proiect propus
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COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION CONTEST WINNERS TO DATE

Previous Community Participation Contest Winners:

November 2007:

“CLIO - Center for Promoting Local Culture and Traditions of Jurilovca ” - <http://www.bibliotecajurilovca.ro> showcases the rich cultural heritage of the local Russian speakers (Lipoveni) through old documents, pictures and tales.

December 2007 (2 winners):

“Infopitici” - The public library of Simian Commune in Bihor County aims to increase the usage of new technologies by creating a small nucleus of local volunteers to provide instruction on basic computer usage and to assist school children, residents and tourists in accessing information via the Internet at the local public library.

“Tales of Saschiz” - The public library of Saschiz Commune in Mureş County developed a local database with organized information regarding funds and grants from the Romanian government and European Union and programs for rural, agricultural, and small and medium sized business development.

January 2008:

“The Right to Stories” - Through the project the CCD Library in Neamt County addresses a specific local problem of children with parents working abroad. As a solution to the lack of parental guidance, children’s rights are to be taught by examples from selected stories rewritten and illustrated by teams of children.

February 2008:

“BibliotecaRadio – www.bibliotecaradio.ro” (Radio Library) The Octavian Goga County Library in Cluj will create an online radio station with a strong emphasis on encouraging cultural revitalization and community information.

March 2008:

“The Library as a Center for Information, School and Career Counseling – Gates Opened to the Future” - The project will create an educational and career counseling resource center at the Țepu public library in Galați County. ■



As part of a networking and public relations course on May 7 in Zalau, the 24 Global Libraries pilot site librarians created four proposed program names and draft logos. The proposed program names and logos will be refined by the IREX team, and presented to the Global Libraries – Romania Steering Committee for final program branding this summer.

Biblioteca@ro, BiblioNet, and Infonet, the names librarians devised for the program, arose from the common goal of having everyone understand the connection between the library and the Internet center. Associated logos they created combined images of computer screens and books in one case and a book and a mouse in another.

The need for the course became evident as Internet centers have started opening, and librarians are faced with new challenges, among the most important of which is generating the involvement of the local community and government in supporting and sustaining the center. Librarians have expressed the need to learn new skills, expand library activities, and promote the libraries’ new services and to do so not only as individuals, but also as part of the larger Romanian library network.

The brainstorming session on the program’s name and logo was the culmination of a course during which Global Libraries – Romania pilot site librarians learned and practiced communication skills which will assist them in encouraging their communities to utilize libraries and Internet centers and local authorities to support libraries. “I think sustainability is one of the biggest challenges we have before us,” commented Baru commune librarian Narcisa Sorescu. “It’s not difficult to open a center, anyone can do it, but we feel more comfortable now that we have some tools to involve our community. Once we know how to start, it then becomes easier to continue.” ■



Bucharest Metropolitan Library building, a 19th century architectonic monument.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION BEGINS PROCESS TO STRENGTHEN CAPACITY ACROSS COUNTRY

The National Association of Libraries and Librarians in Romania (ANBPR), which represents 3,000 librarians, and is the largest of the country's four librarians' associations, has begun a Global Libraries program initiative to assess its organizational capacity and develop a plan to strengthen the association.

Based on discussions with IREX at the ANBPR National Conference in April, the ANBPR expressed the need to strengthen its capacity especially focusing on improving communication, increasing skills in data collection, processing, and reporting, and project management. These activities will help the association prepare to assume a greater role in advocating for libraries and managing aspects of the Global Libraries program.

The assessment process began in May and is expected to be finalized by June 20. Results and planned organizational changes will be discussed at an ANBPR meeting in conjunction with the 3rd Global Libraries round table event on June 23. After this meeting, IREX will have a better understanding of the activities that might be included into the national program to strengthen ANBPR as a partner for program sustainability.

Both ANBPR leaders and members have expressed enthusiasm about improving the association's ability



Librarians participate in computer training.

to advocate for national level policy changes and support librarians' professional development, while also assisting struggling libraries. While representing its members' interests, the ANBPR has not previously undertaken activities to influence national policy.

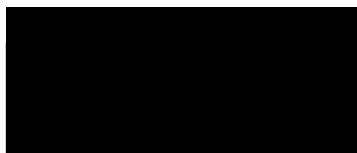
In order to begin the process of organizational review and development, nine ANBPR members met as a working group in Zalau on May 7 to review a document which will be used by the association's members to rate the ANBPR's current capacity. The document laid out possible development goals in five areas: administration, operations and management, human resources, services, and public policies.

Nine association members participated in the meeting: the ANBPR Executive Board, two county library directors from Global Libraries pilot sites, and two librarians who participated in the pro-

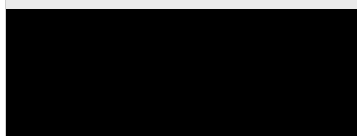
gram's data collection effort for the Library Capacity and Citizens' Needs Assessment.

The nine working group members will use the Organizational Capacity Assessment scorecard that IREX and the ANBPR finalized together to interview association members in 37 counties and evaluate the association's current capacity.

After the evaluation is completed, the ANBPR working group will meet on June 23 to review the evaluation results and prioritize the association's capacity-building goals. The association's future goals may include playing an increased role in providing librarians with professional development training, collecting data on library and Internet center impact and needs, and strengthening libraries that are ineligible to participate in the Global Libraries program during the first few years of implementation. ■



Pensioners explore technology at the Zalau County Library



Young people visit the Internet center at the Tulcea County Library

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ZALAU (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

the center has been impressive. The first course accommodating 24 participants filled immediately, and an additional course has been scheduled for another 16 library patrons. After attending the course at the library, four of the participants reported confidently using their home computers to send messages to each other.

Several participants from the first course have expressed a desire to learn how to use other computing features, including word processing applications, listening to music and downloading digital pictures. Internet center librarian Maria Demble intends to offer new programs at the center "in order to capture and maintain their us-

ers' interest in computers." ■



Celebration at the Zalau County Library

NATIONAL SURVEYS (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)



Users explore web technologies

ply for a grant from the Global Libraries - Romania program to open an Internet center in a public library, localities will need to meet minimum eligibility criteria, including sustaining ongoing Internet connectivity costs, ensuring full time staffing, and providing sufficient space and furniture for the center. In addition, there must be broadband access available to the library.

In addition to learning about readiness for and interest in having free public Internet access centers from the surveys, Romanian citizens were asked about their information needs. The survey found that primary gaps exist in available information on health, local government, small business loans, jobs in Romania, EU funds, job interviews and CVs, and community development funding. Survey respondents also expressed the desire to use the Internet for communication, business plan preparation, and banking.

City hall officials and librarians were interviewed in 205 localities, in both rural and

urban areas with populations of 15,000 or fewer. Local officials discussed their interest in and resources for an Internet center in their community. Librarians responded to questions regarding their ability to use computers and the availability of library resources. In interviews with 1066 citizens, Romanians commented on their use of public libraries, computers, and the Internet as well as their fields of interest and whether they would search for information concerning those fields online. Five librarians assisted CURS with data collection as part of the organizational capacity building process for the National Association of Libraries and Librarians in Romania (ANBPR). ■

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION CONTEST

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

libraries - Romania website live forum (<http://www.biblioteca.ro>). The discussions are available for public view on the website forum. All 78 projects proposed for evaluation are available for download in the E-library section of the website.

Applications submitted to date were prepared by librar-

ies from across Romania and across the scope of library types (see map): 32 from commune libraries (blue balloons—proposed, blue pins—winners), 15 from school libraries (yellow balloons—proposed, yellow pins—winners), 13 from town libraries (maroon balloons—proposed), 10 county libraries (red balloons—proposed, red pin—winner) and eight

from other types of libraries (yellow balloon, no dot—proposed). Geographically, the contest has gathered interest across Romania, as projects originated from 28 of Romania's 42 counties with Bihor, Galați, Neamț and Vâlcea counties being the most active with 8 projects each. ■