

Global Libraries Romania

MONTHLY UPDATE

December 2008

Pilot Site Libraries Demonstrate New Library Services through Community Meetings

In preparation for Romania's recent parliamentary elections, community members at two pilot sites in Salaj County came together to learn about Romania's new national voting system and discuss the upcoming elections. IREX helped to coordinate these meetings with librarians at the Cehu Silvaniei and Bobota public libraries, introducing a new library service to the communities and demonstrating the role of modern libraries in serving their communities.

Located in Salaj County, the Cehu Silvaniei and Bobota public libraries and have been offering public access computing as Global Libraries pilot sites over the last year. In order to expand on this technology and further help these two libraries become informational resources in their communities, the libraries hosted community meetings that included PowerPoint presentations explaining the new parliamentary direct voting system as well explanations on how citizens can access online resources to learn about different candidates.

At the Cehu Silvaniei library, com-

munity members were shown how to access the Internet to learn about local political candidates for Salaj County and find information on those candidates. Librarians also distributed questionnaires during the meeting to learn what types of issues residents would like to discuss in the future. Among the topics listed were youth issues, the environment, Roma issues, and national legislation.

In Bobota, residents were also eager to learn about the new voting system and find online resources about the slate of local candidates. One resident in attendance noted that "information sessions like the one at the library are very useful; people get better informed and are able learn what the local library can do for them."

Librarians and community members in both libraries also agreed to schedule future meetings that will address new vaccination guidelines and healthcare. After the meetings IREX staff also worked alongside librarians to plan and develop annual calendars that will include future community meetings addressing the topics that were raised during each meeting.

■



Residents attend a community meeting about the recent parliamentary elections in Romania at the Bobota public library.

Inside this issue:

PILOT SITE LIBRARIES DEMONSTRATE NEW LIBRARY SERVICES THROUGH COMMUNITY MEETINGS	1
NEW ONLINE RESOURCE FOCUSES ON EDUCATION	2
ROMANIA HOSTS PEER TO PEER REVIEW MEETING	2
CPC UPDATE	2
INTERVIEW WITH ILINCA MIHAILA	3
SALAJ COUNTY UPDATE	4
GLOBAL LIBRARIES ROMANIA RECEIVES MEDIA COVERAGE	4



IREX
WWW.IREX.ORG

"This resource will be helpful for librarians, because many young people, teachers and parents are library users and need guidance when looking for information on education."

-Salaj County librarian Gabriela Balogh,

A draft version of online educational content package can be viewed at:

http://doku.arc-software.ro/Educatie_Resurse_online/doku.php/educatie

- CPC Update -

November CPC Winner: *eFOTO-grafi@mea*

Project Summary: This project, proposed by the "Duiliu Zamfirescu" County Library's children and Youth Section in Focsani, will create a photography club within the library offering photography courses and hosting photography contests for children. The library in Focsani already has some of the technology necessary to run this program and the grant will allow them to purchase digital cameras. The project will provide an opportunity for the library to reach out to the community with new services and attract new users through these services. ■

IREX Facilitates Development of Online Educational Resource

Responding to a need for greater organization of Romanian internet resources, IREX is working with program partners to develop a new online knowledge base focusing on educational resources for Romanian citizens. The "content package" will compile existing online information on formal and non-formal education such as school curricula, examination schedules, virtual classroom lessons and scholarship opportunities. After testing, feedback and revision, the package will serve as a model for further content guides that will facilitate access to critical information to librarians and citizens making use of new library public internet facilities.

This educational content package includes links to web resources on Romanian and international educational opportunities and information. It includes brief explanations of the information available on these pages and

follows the organizational structure of Romania education from pre-school through secondary and higher education.

IREX's *Citizen Information Needs Survey* showed that primarily, citizens are interested in accessing information on healthcare, education, employment, rural community development, and environmental protection. Although much of this information already exists in Romanian, it is often difficult to find or access. To address the lack of convenient portals in accessing this information, IREX has planned to work with librarians organize information on these topics into locally relevant "content packages" for future use by libraries.

IREX aims to create standardized, user-friendly formats which will allow librarians to easily create their own locally relevant content packages that

Continued on Page 5

Romania Hosts Peer to Peer Review Meeting

In an effort to share experiences and ideas from the region on providing public access computers in public libraries, IREX hosted a Peer Review program meeting on November 6-7 in Bucharest. Global Libraries representatives from Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and the Gates Foundation attended the meeting. The gathering provided an opportunity to compare program design and approaches, and learn about how different countries are facing similar issues throughout the region.

Participants used small groups to discuss how program components could be improved. Small group sessions also allowed teams to further impact strategies, training and curriculum development challenges, and techniques to work with libraries to generate local content. In the concluding phases of the meeting, participating teams reviewed obstacles to effective implementation with Gates Foundation staff to devise common solutions and to create solutions to ensure program sustainability.

During a session on advocacy, IREX proposed fostering closer ties between

the ANBPR and library associations in Bulgaria and Poland. IREX is now planning to help the ANBPR develop an agenda during the national program that will encourage regular dialogue between regional library associations to address challenges and share best practices. By allowing the regional library associations to learn from each other, all of the Global Library programs in the region will be strengthened and the ability of the associations to develop their internal capacity will be elevated. ■



Participants review comments about procurement during the Peer to Peer Review Meeting.

Sulina Librarian Iinca Mihaila Discusses Pilot Site Achievements, New Library Services

Over the past year, Iinca Mihaila has had a number of opportunities to work with Global Libraries as the librarian at the Jean Bart Town Library in Sulina. Sulina was selected as a pilot site location for Public Access Computing (PAC) facilities and has since instituted several new services. Mihaila recently sat down with IREX to discuss her experience working with Global Libraries, her accomplishments in introducing new technologies, as well as her work establishing a volunteer program that trains library visitors to use new technologies.

IREX: Could you describe the challenges you faced as well as your achievements in opening PAC facilities in Sulina? What advice would you give to others who want to open centers in the future?

IM: When we started, we only had a project idea, which made it difficult to gain much support. Many in our community did not believe that the project would actually happen or that it would work well. Global Libraries is here to stay, however, and now everybody sees how important the center is for our community.

Speaking of achievements, I think that one of the biggest achievements is that school children have better grades because they have new resources to do their homework at the library. They talk to each other, they ask me to help them and they look for information on the Internet. One of them even told me that he started to like school!

My advice for those who want to open centers is to use all of their public relations skills to attract new users to the library. Internet users can have a different profile from some readers; for them, librarians must be flexible, informed, and updated in many areas.

IREX: You recently started a volunteer program at your library to train library visitors on using technology—why did you start this program? Do you have

any recommendations for other librarians who want to work with volunteers?

IM: I started the volunteer program before opening Global Libraries, because the library had many activities planned for the community and I couldn't do everything myself. Now, we have a partnership with a Bucharest foundation that works in Sulina in which we provide volunteers for their projects, and they provide incentives for the high-school age volunteers such as day trips, camps, and school support.

I think one of the most important recommendations for those who want to work with volunteers would be to find the right incentives and offer public recognition for their work, making them feel useful and rewarded.

IREX: You had the chance to participate in several Global Libraries round tables over the last year, what would you say was the most important benefit of those opportunities?

IM: I found it to be a wonderful opportunity. It was my opportunity to discuss with other librarians about how we need to do everything we can to represent our community. I identify myself with my community and I believe that "we" and "us" are not just empty words.

IREX: What are your plans for next year?

IM: We have a special program called "Global Libraries for all Ages," which is a series of basic computer trainings for various age groups. Every month we will have a small contest and we hope to award prizes to those who learn the most. So, keep your fingers crossed for us, and I'm sure we'll have only good things to report! ■



Iinca Mihaila presents on new services developed at the Jean Part Town Library in Sulina at the Fourth Roundtable in Bazaou.

"The volunteer club was created because we wanted to do more for our town and to better ourselves. One person can only work so much. An organized group of volunteers with a good coordinator means that everything is done well and a lot faster."

Volunteer Rares Guzi, age 18

Salaj County Update: Branch Libraries Innovate to Offer New Services

As one of Global Libraries's Pilot Site locations, the Salaj County Library has been experimenting with new services over the past year. Although it lacks a central location, the library has been innovative in identifying useful community spaces to locate branch libraries. With these improvements in mind, the Salaj County library provides a model of what libraries across Romania can do with limited resources. Following is an overview of some of these services:

Salaj Acasa Foundation

The Salaj Acasa Foundation has also been selected as a branch library location. The Foundation is a new medical facility in Salaj treatment for people with physical disabilities as well as counseling and information services for terminal illnesses, and drug and alcohol dependence. The center includes a new library room and Salaj libraries have been running a weekly movie program for patients as well as visitors. A modern library room has been designed for readers spending time on recovery.



Zalau Pensioners Association

Opened with new computer facilities last May, the Zalau Pensioners Association offers basic computer skills training courses for visitors and helps seniors use the Internet to communicate with children and relatives abroad, read the newspaper, and network with others.

Zalau Hospital

The Zalau Hospital branch library was opened through a Community Participation Contest (CPC) award. This partnership with the hospital was initiated in order to find a way to serve hospital patients and staff and provide services to the hospital neighborhood. Today, the branch has two computers and two staff serving the library and center are aiding with success all people accessing this innovative facility in Romania.



Romanian News Station "Antena 3" Broadcasts Special Report on Global Libraries

On November 16, Romanian news station "Antena 3" aired a special report documenting the work of Global Libraries in Romania over the last year. Incorporating on-site interviews from four of the program's pilot sites, this broadcast highlighted the role of Global Libraries in seeking to bring access to information to public libraries and provide new training opportunities for librarians.

The broadcast comes at an appropriate time, just as Global Libraries is preparing to transition to the "Biblionet" national program and publicize the requirements for participation. By providing an overview and background of the Global Libraries program and the importance of public access to information, the broadcast helped to publicize the program's goals and explain how it will benefit average citizens.

Discussing the planning grant activities of the last year, the program introduced the successes and challenges of four program pilot site locations through interviews with people who benefited from or are looking forward to the establishment of Public Access Internet (PAC) facilities in their communities.

Interviewing librarian Irena Brodoceanu of the Iasi Association for the Visually Impaired, the documentary described the process of applying to the program and the new services now being offered to association's target groups since the Association opened new public access computing facilities this summer. In Sulina, the documentary showed how a loss of industry has forced many parents, especially women, to leave Romania in search of work. As a result, many of the town's children are

being raised by their grandparents, and librarian Ilinca Mihaila has worked hard to ensure that these children have plenty of opportunities. Mihaila has created a new volunteer program that links local high school students with opportunities to work with computers and teach others in the library.

In Scanteia, the documentary underscored the special benefit available to rural communities who have participated in the program. One month after the PAC facility was opened, people now wait in long lines and make appointments to use the computers. For example, the Pintilie family regularly uses the library's internet access to talk with their children and grandchildren who have

IREX Romania Global Libraries Office

Av. Serban Petrescu
Street
Second Floor Town Dis-
trict 1
Bucharest 15

Phone: +40 21 231-5537
Email: gl@irex.ro

IREX Headquarters Office
2121 K Street NW #700
Washington DC 20037

Phone: 202-628-8188
Fax: 202-628-8189
E-mail: gl@irex.org

biblioteca.ro



IREX
WWW.IREX.ORG

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.

Global Libraries Romania Receives Media Coverage

Continued from Page 4

emigrated from Romania. Lenuta Baltac, Scanteia's librarian who advertised the new services in the town noted that more people are regularly visiting the library and book circulation has also increased.

The documentary also described one of the program's challenges—working with reluctant local governments. In Jilava, Biblionet unfortunately had to terminate a partnership when the government became unresponsive and would not commit to using the grant for the town's library. Explaining these challenges also allowed program director Paul-Andre Baran to publically describe that the project is really about creating healthy public libraries that provide public access to all kinds of information. "The purpose of this program is not only to provide a new, modern service for libraries and users, but also to increase the number of library users and to revive the need for reading and books," said Baran. Baran also noted that he has confidence that the Romanian government will understand that a major investment in the library system can dramatically change the situation since only 7% of the population currently visit public libraries.

In addition to the TV documentary, Global Libraries has also received additional local media attention. The daily newspaper "Romanian Libera" recently featured interviews with additional pilot site users in Hunedoara County and Biblionet staff explaining details about the program. As more of the



Romanian news station "Antena 3" interviews Lenuta Pintilie, a PAC library user in Scanteia, Iasi County.

Romanian public becomes aware from media coverage of the effort to modernize libraries, the program is now receiving more requests from libraries interested in learning how they too can participate in the program. ■

The Antena 3 broadcast is available online at:

<http://www.antena3.ro/emisiuni/reporter-special>

The Romania Libera article is available online at:

<http://www.romanalibera.ro/a139272/opincile-lui-badea-cartan-gasite-cu-ajutorul-lui-bill-gates.html>

New Online Educational Resource

Continued from Page 2

respond to community information demand. The six standard packages will serve both as subject resources for systematic selection and organization of relevant content. The development of the first of these packages, *Education – A Collection of Online Resources*, is currently being facilitated by IREX and is being reviewed before it is released to the public.

To engage information specialists and future users in the review process and gather as much feedback as possible, IREX has organized a series of peer-review activities at biblioteca.ro. This review process will allow librarians and library users to comment and suggest improvements to the format or content.

The draft package has received an enthusiastic response. According to Salaj County librarian Gabriela Balogh, "This is a very useful resource; it is well structured and organized and contains relevant information about topical issues. It will be helpful for librarians, because many young people, teachers and parents are library users and need guidance when looking for information on education."

Once the package is finalized, IREX will make it available to libraries and librarians to use as an informational resource. Over the long term, these content packages will make it easier for librarians to organize important content, and Romanians to access that information online. ■