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INSIDE:

TWELVE COUNTIES ANNOUNCED AS PARTICIPANTS IN BIBLIONET'S FIRST ROUND 1

LIBRARY STAFF'S PERSISTENCE AND VISION DELIVERS LOCAL FUNDING FOR NEW LIBRARY TECHNOLOGY 1

ANBPR EXECUTIVE BOARD GATHERS FOR CAPACITY BUILDING WORKSHOP 2

NEAMT COUNTY LIBRARY REACHES OUT WITH TOURIST INFORMATION CENTER 3

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-Suceava County Library Director Gabriel Carabus

Twelve Counties Announced as Participants in Biblionet's First Round

Following the Biblionet program launch on April 30, 2009, over 30 county libraries in Romania submitted applications to participate in the program. The applications included information about county library plans for future public information access, résumés of potential training staff, and a blueprint of community services to be provided by the county library and the network of up to 25 local libraries proposed to the program. On-site visits of 17 applicants then confirmed important eligibility conditions for program qualification, evaluated the cohesion of the county library management teams, and assessed the libraries' relationships with local and county officials.

The on-site visits were compared to the libraries' statements of intent before the Biblionet selection committee, comprised of repre-



The Bacau County Library will be one of 12 participating in the Biblionet program.

sentatives from IREX, the Pro Democracy Association, the American Chamber of Commerce, the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE), Microsoft, the Peace Corps, and World Vision, made a final selection of twelve counties for

participation in the program's first round.

Biblionet program activities for these 12 counties are now beginning as IREX and county and local libraries sign memoranda of understanding formalizing their relationships for the program, outline responsibilities regarding equipment, training, and advocacy efforts to be conducted by each county library. Local governments will also be joining the process as they support their county libraries by signing formal agreements to provide their share of the program's cost.

In late August, the first group of Training of Trainers (ToT) participants will begin courses in Timisoara. Once county library training centers are equipped, ToT graduates will then help deliver courses for local librarians in their county as trainers.

Library Staff's Persistence and Vision Delivers Local Funding for New Library Technology

The doors to the renovated "I.G. Sbiera" Library in Suceava County first opened on November 1, 2006. Thanks to the efforts of the library's management and staff to secure funding for new technology, users with a valid county library pass have been able to take advantage of free internet access, assistance with online searches and library databases, and basic com-



The Suceava County Library now offers visitors access to new technology.

puter literacy training for several years.

The management at Suceava County Library first decided to invest in their library in late 2005, but lacked the funding in their budget from the county. Undeterred, library leaders sent a memo to the Suceava Municipal Council requesting the necessary funds. The library is located

Continued on Page 6

ANBPR Executive Board Sets Strategic Objectives At Capacity Building Workshop

Members of the National Association of Public Libraries and Librarians' (ANBPR) Executive Board recently came together to finalize the Association's strategic planning process. Board members used the meeting, held in Piatra Neamt for three days in early July, to conduct an in-depth analysis of the ANBPR's strengths and weaknesses and identify upcoming challenges and opportunities. Based on the meeting, the ANBPR has agreed to four strategic objectives that will guide the Association's work over the next four years:

1. Improve communication with ANBPR members;
2. Encourage members to be more actively involved in preparing and implementing Association activities;
3. Strengthen professional training and development, and the ability to adapt to modern professional requirements;
4. Increase ANBPR's capacity to become a strategic partner with government officials in public policy development.

IRES asked two members of the Executive Board, **Salaj County Library Director Ms. Florica Pop** and **Sibiu County Library Director Mr. Onuc Nemes**, to share their thoughts about the ANBPR's progress and their involvement in the process.

Florica Pop: The ANBPR institutional capacity building process started last year and proved that every member is important and can contribute to the decision-making process. Everyone's ideas contribute to finding the strongest approaches so that the merits of library professionals can be acknowledged properly. Moreover, all members understood they also had responsibilities; it was important that everybody did their jobs properly, while knowing that they were supported nationally by a professional association.

Our association members—those who participated in the meetings and were quite candid—left the strongest impression on me, since they managed to pinpoint the problems in every county. A lot of people were willing to share their own skills, time and services so that ANBPR can work more efficiently and more widely recognized.

One area in which we learned there is room for improvement is that much of the important information that the management of the ANBPR has sent out to members still stays with the county library manager or the president of the library, without being disseminated throughout the county.

Onuc Nemes: The fact that the ANBPR took the responsibility to help implement the Biblionet program, as a partner, is an act of courage since the Association lacks experience and support in developing such a large-scale project. ANBPR is only as strong as its members, and a number of strong leaders keep it going. This type of perseverance is what has really contributed to the process.



Sibiu County Library Director Onuc Nemes and Salaj County Library Director Florica Pop (center) during the ANBPR Capacity Building Workshop.

How do you think a more organized association could help your library? What problems at the county level could be solved with help from the association?

FP: ANBPR represents every individual library and every librarian, so that whenever problems occur, the whole Association should respond with an appropriate solution. More clear communication among association members has already proven that a lot of clarification can benefit county libraries. I have found that ANBPR members are more confident in the management, especially because librarians from all counties ask questions and raise issues that they don't understand and that have not been solved in their home counties.

There are a lot of problems that libraries and librarians encounter that can be solved if ANBPR steps in—above all, legislative issues, international exchanges of experience, among others.

ON: The more developed the Association, the better moral and professional support it can provide for any library. Its strength and outside image will then provide support to all concerned.

As a member of the Executive Board, which one of the four strategic development objectives are you most passionate about? How can you contribute to meeting this objective?

FP: I guess I have found my true calling here and I would really like to do more so that members of the association can get more involved in its activities. Since I have noticed that most ANBPR members want to get more involved, I think we should have a program that can involve the right people for all of the proposed activities.

ON: Overall, librarians find themselves in a severe professional decline, both in terms of traditional and modern library services. It has not been our focus to develop public policies so far, but it may become so in the future. More to the point, I could bring input in this area, in combination with training and continuous education.

Where do you hope the association will be at the end of the capacity development process? What do you hope will be the association's development stage of the association at the end of the process?

FP: Being an optimist, I believe that we will become a mature, functioning organization!

ON: ANBPR's involvement the Bibliomist program will guide the association to become stronger and more mature so that, at the end of this process, we will offer a clear advocacy for public libraries in Romania.

Can you offer any words of encouragement to your colleagues at ANBPR?

FP: Trust, action, reliability, perseverance; be generous and professional and we will all reap the benefits!

ON: There may be obstacles along the way, but we will succeed!

Neamt County Library Reaches Out with Tourist Information Center

Nearly ten years ago an interest in promoting local tourism opportunities led the Neamt County Library to create a local Tourist Information Center. Home to some of Romania's leading tourist attractions and historical sites, the region has experienced steady growth in local tourism in recent years. The library recognized that the community's tourism industry could benefit from seeing the region's travel destinations and information better organized for visitors. Reaching out to local businesses and governments, the Dr. Gheorghe Iacomi Tourist Information Center is now a clearinghouse for tourist materials for the entire county.

The library offers information on tourist destinations, popular trip itineraries, local accommodation, modes of transport, a catalogue of tourism-related laws and regulations, and a calendar of Neamt cultural events. In addition to resource collections, the Tourist Information Center has also put out a number of publications, like the Mount Ceahlau map in 2005 and has partnered with local libraries to establish "satellite" tourist resource centers that share the county's publications and tourism materials.

The Center has brought in a number of partners to broaden its impact and connect with the local community. The library has worked with the National Tourism Authority to participate in professional trainings in 2005, and engages in frequent educational outreach activities with

The "Dr. Gheorghe Iacomi" Tourist Information Center Website www.neamt-turism.ro.

schools in the county capital of Piatra Neamt. Local students use the Center's resources to hold discussions, contests, photography exhibitions, information sessions, and film screenings to strengthen their knowledge of local history and the natural environment.

"One of our major goals is to promote tourism in Neamt county; over the past four years Neamt County Library took part in all of the international tourism fairs in Bucharest with information materials, as sole representative of the county," explains Tourist Information Center Coordinator Cristina Costachi.

The "G.T. Kirileanu" County Library also

hosts an information portal on the Web at www.neamt-turism.ro, bringing the offline Center online with information in Romanian, English and French. Costachi and library managers have excelled in using their resources and innovation to provide an important service and form a close connection with the local community. The County Library in Neamt is now one of twelve that have been selected for participation in the first round of the IREX-implemented Biblionet program.



View of the mountains surrounding Lake Bicz in Neamt County.

"Over the past four years Neamt County Library took part in all of the international tourism fairs in Bucharest with information materials."

*~Tourism Information Center Coordinator
Cristina Costachi*

Biblionet is proud to introduce the first year program participants who have demonstrated a commitment to improving library services, responding to community needs, and increasing access to information:



Constanta County Library



Ciuhoi Library, Bihor County



Lapusul de Sus Library, Harghita



Iasi County Library



Salaj Acasa Foundation Library



Braila County Library



Maramures County Library



Podoleni Library in Neamt County



Boscani Library, Suceava



Draganesti Library, Galati



Daiesti library in Valcea County

IREX Biblionet Office:

15 Dr. Staicovici Nicolae
St., 050556, District 5
Bucharest, Romania

Phone: **+4021 410 2563**
Fax: **+ 4021 410 2564**
Email: office@irex.ro

IREX Headquarters:

2121 K Street NW #700
Washington DC 20037

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



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WWW.IREX.ORG

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Library Staff's Persistence and Vision Delivers Local Funding for New Library Technology

Continued from Page 1

in the Suceava County capital city of the same name, and the library's request invoked a section of Romania's Libraries Law specifying that, "Local councils of county seats may finance cultural programs, investment and expenses that may be needed for the local county library."

When talks with the local mayor and vice-mayor failed to find money in the city budget, however, the library again changed course and petitioned members of the city council directly. After submitting an application for their request to be debated in a plenary meeting, the library representatives succeeded in getting a hearing for their proposal with the city council on May 25, 2006.

Skeptical representatives wanted to know why the Suceava City Council should finance the project of an institution that reports to, and is implicitly financed by, the County Council. Second, city officials asked library management why the library should be providing computers and internet access, a service that officials associated with private cafes.

Answering the first question was easy, recalls Suceava County Library Director Gabriel Carabus. "We explained that the vast majority of the users are citizens of the county seat and the Libraries Law entitles county libraries to get funds from the local councils in their home cities too."

On the second point, Carabus and his staff explained that modern libraries can draw new visitors by offering access to many different types of information. This explanation helped to reframe the traditional notion of both a library and internet access. "We had to explain that the e-reading room (as we called it, in order to make a distinction between the library's computers and private internet cafes) had to exist because our services could be more complete and community members would get these services for free." He also made the case that with appropriate funding, library staff could be on hand to assist in online searches and database research and help train users in basic computer skills.

The story of Suceava County Library's Community Internet Center has become a model for the changing role of Romania's county and local library systems. Library staff were committed to providing a full range of modern information services to visitors, and became tireless advocates in working with local government officials to support their vision. County Library Director Gabriel Carabus explains the impact the Center has had on the role of the library in the community:

"Through this new service, the county library has managed to bring books and culture to ever more residents. Users can get information from the Internet while spending time in our library. Our library does not neglect traditional books and the technology is used to complement the books, so that the library can successfully provide access to any kind of information, for anyone, anytime."

Today, the I.G. Sbiera Library in Suceava is one of 12 county libraries and their local affiliate libraries, from an applicant pool of more than 30, that have been selected for participation in the first round of the IREX-implemented Biblionet program.



"Technology is used to complement the books, so that the library can successfully provide access to any kind of information, for anyone, anytime."

-Suceava County Library Director Gabriel Carabus