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Lung Testing at the Library Increases COPD Awareness and Support

For more than 60 residents of Carpinis, Romania, a recent visit to the library was far from typical. Instead of checking out books or looking for information on the Internet, a doctor and a spirometer were waiting for them. This was a rare opportunity to receive medical care and advice without having to travel to urban areas, and an innovative use of the library to improve community health. "My health is not good at all, I had a heart attack some time ago and I tire easily. I can't afford to go to the hospital every time I need to, but I try to have tests every time I have a chance," Petru Țăranu explained, while Ioan Get added that it was difficult to see a doctor in the commune: "We have no specialists here; we



Doctors meet patrons at rural libraries to test for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease

would need to go to Timisoara or some other city. At the library, it's easy to come. Everybody knows where it is."

Rural libraries from nine counties took part in a campaign initiated by GlaxoSmithKline and two Romanian

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A Night at the Library: Nationwide Campaign Showcases Library Services After Dark

On Saturday, October 1st, libraries across Romania kept their doors open long past their usual closing times to host an array of community events highlighting their role as leaders in offering people access to culture, education, and entertainment. Library Night was organized by the National Association of Public Libraries and Librarians in Romania (the ANBPR) and two NGOs and was the first event of its kind. Over 23,000 people visited their local library that evening, with most open from 6pm-3am. There were 52 public libraries involved, joined by several academic and scientific libraries, the US Embassy Information and Reference Center, and some bookstores.

The ANBPR used social media, including a special blog and Facebook page, to promote the events that included opportunities to meet writers, film-makers and actors, to listen to authors reading from their work, and to watch plays for children. The following highlights are just a few of the activities from that night.

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A Night at the Library: Nationwide Campaign Showcases Library Services After Dark

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SIBIU

Over 1,300 people visited the ASTRA library in Sibiu, with many joining Cosmin Tomescu, a specialist in astronomy and astrology, to learn about the sky. The telescope and special software offered a special opportunity to stargaze from the 5th floor terrace. High school student Larisa remarked, "It was too beautiful to be true! Do you know how wonderful Sibiu is at night seen from the terrace of the library?"

BRASOV

In Brasov, the library hosted a play and interactive improvisation games from a local group called the Theatre Suitcase. Some of the attendees were tourists from Germany, who were impressed to find the library open for free Saturday evening entertainment. In the reading room, patrons participated in a "lock in," where they read together for an hour under feigned lock and key to demonstrate their enthusiasm for reading.

CAREI

An acoustic concert was the highlight of the evening in Carei, with well-known artists performing at midnight. This was the first time the library had hosted a concert, and the librarians were thrilled with the reaction of the audience. Corina Nuna reflected on the planning process and results from the evening: "All in all, we are pleased with what happened in our library. What really matters is that the whole city heard about it. Patrons stop us in the street to ask if we are organizing another event next year!"

SUCEAVA

The children's section organized the "Train of Read-



Children attend a theater performance in Constanta



Historian Tudor Rosu presents his joint research project with librarian Steliana Armian on Elvis in communist Romania

ing," where children and librarians read to one another from their favorite book. The 30 participants all received prizes, and met the new library mascot, a chipmunk.

DOLJ

In Dolj, "Library Night" hosted about 1,000 people, curious and eager to find out what happens beyond the public areas of the institution. Patrons of all ages were taken on behind-the-scenes tours of the library collection. Children visited the warehouse of books and periodicals where materials are stored, while adults crowded into the Elena Farago Memorial House for a rare opportunity to see the poet's original documents.

ALBA

In Alba, librarian Steliana Armian and historian Tudor Rosu presented their unique research project, "*Biblionet and historical research: Elvis in communist Romania.*" The presentation demonstrated how community members can use technology to explore their individual interests and passions and was intended to motivate the participants to reach out to the librarian and find creative ways to use the new computers.

CONSTANTA

In Constanta, interim library manager Adriana Gheorghiu said, "The attendance rate was above expectations. Many children and adults showed up in order to take advantage of a Saturday evening spent doing something different from the typical night spent in front of the TV. This encourages us, the librarians, and justifies our belief that the library is a space for the convergence of the entire community." According to the estimates, over 500 people checked out the library that night, with 150 people attending a children's theater performance. ■

Friends of the Library Group Rallies to Save Iasi Library

Library supporters in Iasi are rallying to save their public library after the central location was shuttered in 2010. To raise awareness of this issue, the newly formed Friends of the Library group staged a makeshift library in the square outside of the Palace of Culture, a symbol of Iasi and the former location for the central branch of the library.

Friends of the Library groups are advocacy partners for libraries and work with librarians to promote and support library activities. In Iasi, losing the main library has caused serious problems - users find it difficult to reach the new locations, which are unfit and in inaccessible areas of the city. Librarians and volunteers in the Friends group decided to organize a petition drive to restore the space. They drew chalk outlines of different sections of the library in the square, with symbolic computers, media, and periodicals showing the resources that would be available to people if the library were still open. Volunteers from a recent program that offered training in CPR and basic first aid to library patrons staffed a Red Cross tent, and a teenager volunteered to



Librarian Diana Ghioghies displays results of a petition drive to restore the Iasi Library Central Branch

play guitar in the improvised media room. In four hours, nearly 400 citizens signed the petition asking the local government to take action.

Librarian Diana Ghioghies explained, "We chose a Saturday evening, when Palace Square was full of families with children, teenagers and people of all ages, to let them know that the library is not where they knew it and we need their help to give the city a modern library." The organizers included a local NGO, the Center for Community and Social Mediation, and Dr. Tudor Ciuhodaru, a Member of Parliament and candidate for the next mayoral election.

The Friends of the Library project is funded by Biblionet through an advocacy small grants program that aims to mobilize local community resources, raise funds and raise the profile of the library so that it can secure a new, appropriate building and continue to serve the people of Iasi. ■

Tivgeni Arges Library Demonstrates Power of Partnerships

In Tivgeni Arges, Librarian Kristina Diana Filip actively seeks opportunities to build partnerships both large and small. These partnerships allow her to develop new services that meet the evolving needs of the community and offer people opportunities to connect with each other and the library. With the computers and training she received from Biblionet, those opportunities are currently expanding.

One of the library's frequent patrons is Tamara Draga, a widow who moved to the rural area from Brasov with her daughter a few years ago. Mrs. Draga is an avid knitter and connects with people who share her hobby through online forums using the library computers. The library has offered her an outlet for her hobbies and also provides essential information and comfort. "I come to the library often. In the past, I had many problems. At the library, I've found information I needed for my taxes and a place to relax." Mrs. Draga is grateful for the friendships she has found at the library, and is now a library volunteer.

The Tivgeni Arges library has also attracted people with

new educational opportunities. Through a partnership with the Lingua International Association of Pitesti, the library has provided training for 80 community members in professional development courses to become bartenders/restaurant servers or salespeople. The courses were funded by the European Union under a program that builds labor market competencies in rural areas. Filip marketed the course through a local TV station, and when her registration list exceeded the capacity of the library, the mayor agreed to move the trainings to the meeting hall at the local council. The trainings were successful, and Filip plans to build upon the experience this winter with new courses in computer literacy and English.

Librarians across Romania are demonstrating that building relationships at all levels is the key to being a hub of community development. Whether citizens are connecting to people far away through online forums or sitting next to a neighbor at a free course, the library is at the center of their lives. ■



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Lung Testing at the Library Increases COPD Awareness and Support



Rural library patrons were able to receive information along with instant results from lung capacity testing

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NGOs to raise awareness of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), an illness that affects more than 1 million Romanians. World Health Organization data shows that Romania ranks third in Europe in terms of the incidence of COPD among men. Medical services are not very well organized in rural areas, and people frequently disregard symptoms. Because of this, the campaign went beyond spirometry (lung capacity) tests to include detailed explanations from doctors about COPD and its symptoms.

Curcani is a poor community in Romania, where over 50% of the residents are Roma and there are minimal social services. With the support of city leaders, librarian Nicoleta Eftene has put the library on the map by hosting community events, including lung capacity tests. "I want people to see there's still a spark of life in this little library. When we invited people to be tested, they were reluctant at first. They couldn't believe that they could check their health at the library for free. I keep telling them: when you hear of something hap-

pening at the library, it's always free!"

For pulmonologist Igor Adascalita, meeting people at the library was effective outreach: "The librarian organized it very well, targeting people who fit the profile for the disease. Out of 30 people, we discovered seven cases of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. This is what we call preventative action, and it's very important for asthma and other chronic illnesses."

Librarian Mihaela Tanasa of Popricani also organized lung testing for her patrons. She believes: "This is not only about the spirometry itself, but also about other information the people receive. We had about 100 people checked today and all left with a brochure, with advice and some ideas about where to go for treatment."

The opportunity to combine the missions of public libraries to provide information resources and a space for the community with health services ordinarily unavailable to rural populations is a powerful demonstration of how dedicated librarians are developing diverse partnerships to bring new services to their communities. ■