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*"We learned together how modern technology can help us respond to the information needs of modern users, how to support users with our own services, and how to create a more positive image of the library and the librarian's job in our society."*

*Baia Mare librarian Stefan Selek*

## Bliblionet Training in Timisoara Certifies 12 New Librarian Trainers

Librarians representing Salaj, Bihor, Valcea, Maramures, Harghita, and Constanta counties met in Timisoara last month for Biblionet's first Training of Trainers (ToT) session. The training course was led by representatives from Educating for an Open Society (EOS), a Romanian organization helping to train future librarian trainers for the first 12 Biblionet counties. Twelve librarians, two from each county participating in Biblionet's first training cohort, took part in the opening session following a rigorous recruitment and selection process.

The training focused on adult education, advocacy, and training methodology along with practical hands-on IT training over the course of the five-day seminar. Course participants were selected to be trainers through a competitive process as a part of their county's application to the Biblionet program. During



ToT participant Mimi Ciobanu shares ideas with her colleagues.

the training, each librarian had an opportunity to practice leading their own training session in the last two days of the course and received feedback from EOS instructors and their peers. The graduates will now become Biblionet trainers at their respective county library training centers over the com-

ing months.

Reflecting on the training, Baia Mare librarian Stefan Selek emphasized the advantages of a group-learning environment and focus on conducting outreach to meet library visitor needs. "We learned to-

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## Bliblionet IT and Library Management Training Underway



Local librarians in Salaj during office productivity software training.

A total of 150 librarians from Bihor, Constanta, Harghita, Maramures, Salaj and Valcea counties have been trained this month in IT and library management. The librarians are from among the 235 libraries selected to participate in the first round of the Biblionet program and are completing initial training courses before receiving new library computers.

County librarians who completed Training of Trainers (ToT) courses in Timisoara (see article above) served as co-trainers and assisted lead instructors from Biblionet's partner organization Educating for an Open Society (EOS).

These courses are the first in a series of three planned for each librarian

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## An interview with Stefan Plesoianu, Constanta County Library Training and Collection Development Coordinator

Stefan Radian Plesoianu began his career as an English translator and Romanian language and literature teacher. In 2001, Plesoianu became head of the New Books and later Training and Statistics departments at the Constanta County Library. Since 2008, he has served as vice-president of the Romanian National Public Library Association's (ANBPR) Constanta branch, Editor-in-chief of the County Library's *Biblion* magazine (available online at the library website <http://www.biblioteca.ct.ro/>), and founder of the Monographica Project to support scientific research and writing in Constanta. IREX caught up with Plesoianu to discuss his most recent responsibilities as coordinator of the Biblionet program in Constanta County.

***As the Biblionet coordinator for Constanta County, what were some of the most challenging and most rewarding moments during the selection process?***

The selection process involved a lot of hard work and engagement with local partners. Nevertheless, I was pleasantly surprised when I met very open people in several small and relatively poor communities who wanted to change their lives for the better. On a slightly disappointing note, I would mention two communes that have very good libraries and librarians and whose mayors asked me to advocate for Biblionet in the Local Council meetings. Local councilors expressed their principle agreement and even investigated possible applications for the village branches, but the mayors then refused the partnership proposals! Nevertheless, we were proud to be among the first 12 counties selected for the first round..

***Librarians from your county recently participated in a Biblionet Training of Trainers (ToT), how did the training sessions for county librarians go? Were the first and second sessions different from each other?***

The second training session is currently in full swing, but we have found no significant differences so far. We enjoy the benefit of some very skilled trainers from EOS [Educating for an Open Society] as well as our own colleagues, who put a lot

of heart into their work. The course atmosphere was quite friendly. There were times, in both sessions, when we were surprised by the determination of the trainees; they even declined to take breaks so that they could better understand presentations and get more hands-on practice.

***In your capacity as a methodologist, but also as a vice-president of a local branch of the ANBPR, what are your expectations in terms of the activities that the association runs in the field of professional training and development?***

I believe that ANBPR should organize courses on a regular basis, on specialty topics targeting rural librarians. Professional development has to go beyond the classical paradigm; a strong association should help the most disadvantaged members, and only then should the problems of those with more resources be addressed. But in general we do not do that – if the methodologist is good at it, then he or she runs some courses with rural librarians; if not, there are no programs, though mayors sometimes encourage librarians to attend the classical “specialization courses” at the Center for Professional Training for Cultural Institutions. Fortunately, Biblionet is breathing some new life in a system which is outdated and has been paralyzed for a number of years.

***Constanta County Library is a member of both ANBPR and the Romanian Library Association (ABR). How are the two associations cooperating locally, and what are the benefits that the library gets from this double membership?***

Yes, we are members of both associations and some colleagues are members of both associations as well; others belong to neither of them. There are benefits in disseminating information and exchanging best practices between associations. Cooperation between the two associations is especially good at the local level and may help lay the foundation of a merger at some point in the future. We also believe that we can set an example for our colleagues nationwide: we can all do more if we stick together.



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**- Stefan Plesoianu**

## Suceava County Library Opens New Training Facility for Librarians

On September 9 Suceava County Library Director Gabriel Carabus joined Suceava Biblionet coordinator Lăcrămioara Cocuz to inaugurate the library's new laptop training center along with library staff, local officials, media representatives, and members of the community. In July, Suceava was selected as one of 12 counties to participate in the first round of the Biblionet program. As in other selected counties, the training center's new computers will help librarians throughout Suceava County improve their IT and computer management skills.

Located in a spacious new facility, Suceava's training center has been equipped with 11 laptop computers, a digital projector, a printer, and a wireless router. The center will be also be staffed with two full-time trainers who will help librarians from more than 20 communes in Suceava organize and promote new library services to better serve their communities. The Suceava County library network consists of 111 public libraries—96 of which are located in rural villages—that serve a population of roughly 700,000.

To celebrate the arrival of the training center at the "IG Sberia" County Library, Carabus called a press confer-

ence to outline the Biblionet program for local mayors and members of the media. Suceava County Council Vice President Vasile Ilie congratulated the mayors and librarians for qualification for the Biblionet program, "Access to information is the best possible way of breathing new life into libraries and increasing the number of visitors." Suceava's Department of Culture and Religion representative Corina Ignat also underscored the importance of developing modern library services for local citizens.

Joining Ilie and Ignat were select mayors from those communities participating in Biblionet's first round, including officials from Vatra Dornei, Sadova and Balaceana. In all, ten mayors attended the event and another ten communities were represented by librarians and other public employees. During the opening, local mayors pledged their support for the program and expressed optimism about the possibilities new investments in libraries and access to information could provide to their rural constituents--80 percent of whom currently have no internet access. History professor and Sadova commune Mayor Rusu Gheorghe remarked, "The Biblionet program is an opportunity for us to reestablish the role and importance of the library in society."



Sadova commune Mayor Rusu Gheorghe.

## Community Participation Contest Re-Launch Solicits Fresh Ideas from Romania's Libraries

On September 1 the Biblionet program extended a call for submissions in the official re-launch of the popular Community Participation Contest. The contest encourages librarians and community members to integrate new technologies in creative forms of outreach to library visitors and local communities. Contest winners receive awards and support for implementing their projects.

First launched in November 2007, the CPC received 114 project proposals in its first 12 rounds. Projects already completed have addressed a range of community needs, from developing an online community radio station in Cluj to establishing a photography club for kids in Focsani. Several former CPC winners continue to operate as sustainable projects, suggesting that libraries offer a model for innovative community development in addition to traditional book-lending.

As Paul Condrat, coordinator of Center for Promoting Local Culture and Traditions (CLIO project) of Jurilovca explained, "The Community Participation Contest was a

***"The Community Participation Contest was a catalyst to better structure the idea and increase the interest of the community towards traditions."***

catalyst to better structure the idea and increase the interest of the community towards traditions. Though the implementation period and the three months when the project was supposed to take place are long gone, CLIO continues: we rediscover our traditions; we find documents with historical

value which have to be conserved... CLIO is now part of our lives!"

The Community Participation Contest encourages participation from all of Romania's librarians, regardless of affiliation with the Biblionet program. Contest rounds will be held every two months and will often target a specific project theme. Submissions will be evaluated through an open process in the online forums on Biblionet's website before the final bi-monthly winner is determined.

The first edition of the CPC scheduled for September/October 2009 is an open topic; Biblionet is now accepting applications for one- to six-month community projects on any topic. Previous entries are now catalogued in the E-library section of [www.biblionet.ro](http://www.biblionet.ro) to serve as innovative examples of how Romania's libraries can become hubs of community life.

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**12 Librarians Graduate as First Class of Biblionet Trainers**



Librarian trainees help launch Biblionet's first ToT session in a team building exercise

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gether how modern technology can help us respond to the information needs of modern users, how to support users with our own services, and how to create a more positive image of the library and the librarian's job in our society."

The new trainers have now returned to their counties and are already leading courses covering IT skills and library management for librarian colleagues. The first set of courses, slated to be completed by early October, is being co-taught with assigned mentors for EOS.

**IT and Library Management Courses Train 150 Librarians**

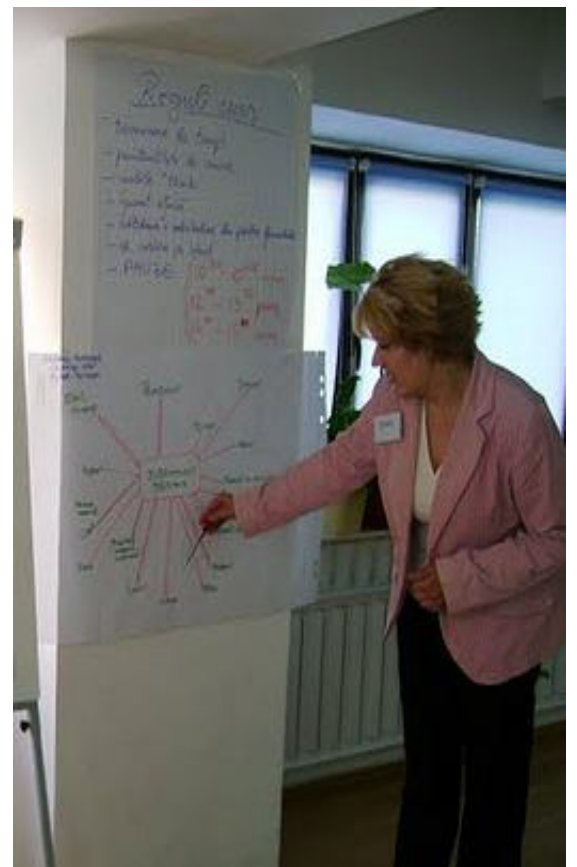
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participating in the first round of the Biblionet program. The first course covers IT-focused professional skills for librarians working in Biblionet libraries at the municipal, commune, and village levels. Course participation is a prerequisite for librarians in libraries that will receive computers through the program and participants are covering important topics including learning how to access the Internet and create an email account, use office productivity software, and use basic computer hardware tools like CD drives. Additional courses are scheduled to take place between late September and early October 2009. In total, nearly 180 librarians are slated to attend the courses at their county library training centers as part of the Biblionet program in September and October 2009.

Aurica Borbei of Benesat commune in Salaj County said the course "provided basic knowledge and made us want to learn more secrets of ICT to teach others in turn. Everybody looks forward to getting the computer equipment back home at Benesat. We really need this kind of support a lot in the rural communities."

Quoted in an article from a paper in Salaj county entitled "Communal Librarians Educated through Biblionet Program," Zalau County Library Director Florica Pop spoke to the important role that local authorities can play outside of the program, expressing her

"hope that other mayors will follow the example and will start modernizing rural libraries."



A Maramures librarian explains the concept of personal networks.