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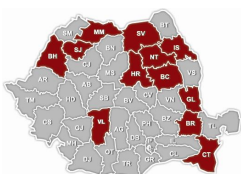
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## 235 Libraries in 12 Counties Begin Serving the Public with New Technology

As of December 22, all 235 libraries participating in Round 1 of Biblionet are now offering public access computing in their libraries. 994 total computers were delivered, for an average of four computers per library,

in Bacu, Bihor, Braila, Constanta, Galati, Harghita, Iasi, Maramures, Neamt, Salaj, Suceava, and Valcea (see map on page 7). Libraries throughout the counties held ribbon-cutting events to demonstrate new services to users, featur-

ing local government officials, fellow librarians, representatives from the Ministry of Culture, and Biblionet staff. More details about opening ceremonies can be found in the following articles.

### Valcea Goes Online as Biblionet Rolls Out in 20 Local Libraries

Violeta Perian has been a librarian in the town of Ocnele Mari in Valcea County for 38 years. With just a year to go before she retires, she is now presiding over the total transformation of her library into a hub of online information and modern user services as part of the Biblionet program. Surrounded by her county colleagues, local elected officials, and representatives from the Ministry of Culture, IREX, and other

partners, Ms. Perian had the honor of opening the newly upgraded Ocnele Mari library in a ribbon-cutting ceremony on November 25, 2009.

Biblionet Director Paul Baran recognized the hard work of librarians like Perian in making partnerships between libraries and the Biblionet program a success, explaining, "A lot of people have asked 'why libraries'? It's simple: it's all



Ocnele Mari Librarian Violeta Perian joins local officials in a Biblionet ribbon-cutting ceremony in Valcea

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### Internet Access Supports Local Culture in Historic Harghita County Villages

On December 3, 2009, the library in Lunca de Jos, a commune in the Ghimes Gorge region on the border of Harghita and Bacau counties, celebrated its partnership in the Biblionet program in a launch ceremony with local officials. Supported by the Harghita County Library and government representatives at both the county and local level, Lunca de Jos joins 18 other commune and municip-

pal libraries in the Harghita Biblionet network.



Lunca de Jos Librarian Edith Mihok inaugurates the commune library's new computer and internet services

Lunca de Jos librarian Edith Mihok used the occasion to express her excitement and optimism about the kinds of library services available to the local community with the help of Biblionet's modern technology and technical training programs. "Users will visit the library much more frequently and internet access will bring many more opportunities. My plan is to

*Continued on Page 6*

## An Interview with Harghita County Biblionet Coordinator Melinda Bedo

In October, Harghita County librarian Melinda Bedo and eleven of her colleagues representing counties throughout Romania completed a five-day Training of Trainers (ToT) course and passed a certification exam administered by Romania's National Council for the Professional Training of Adults (CNFPA). The twelve graduates will now lead training sessions for local librarians as Biblionet Coordinators in their respective counties. Bedo sat down with IREX to discuss the course, her first experiences training local librarians in Harghita, and her vision for the future of the Biblionet program.

### ***What were the most interesting moments in training local librarians in Harghita at the end of the course?***

We had three groups of trainees and the recommendation from our ToT instructors was to start with the library management parts of the course in the first two groups, and then focus on IT in the third. I realized it would have been a lot easier for me to teach IT to the first two groups, because they knew less and I felt I could have helped them more. Certain parts of the IT section were new to me as well, so I had to study them at home in order to be prepared for the course. It would have helped, I guess, if we had been through the exact same course as the local librarians once ourselves, to master the content with some guidance, but it all went very well in the end.

I would like to thank IREX for thinking about local needs in the way they organized these courses, especially for the manuals translated in Hungarian for Harghita County librarians.



Harghita County Biblionet Coordinator and Librarian Melinda Bedo presents at the ToT session in October

ans. The instructor from EOS [Educating for an Open Society, a Romanian-based NGO and IREX partner in the ToT course] was very good in adjusting to the situation as well, because we had to stop and explain some of the terms in both Romanian and Hungarian. But this was very helpful, because now everybody knows the terms forwards and backwards. In fact, the whole IT section was very much in line with the needs of the librarians, unlike a lot of regular IT courses.

### ***What was your experience with the Biblionet Training of Trainers (ToT) course and exam? You had the best overall scores - how did you feel?***

It was a first for my colleague Isabella and me. We had clear expectations—we wanted to learn how to teach others properly. We had some previous experience because we trained local librarians in library software and management. But some of our own courses were more successful than others, so we felt the need to get some structure, some clear methods. Before the ToT course we just used our intuition.

I loved the way the course was designed; it was very interactive, and things seemed to flow from one another naturally. We were invested in our own training process 100%. We could ask the instructors for help on anything we needed, and their supervision was reassuring during our local training pilot sessions. When the course was over, I talked to the lead instructor about course design and content and his remarks were very useful for our performance as trainers.

Ahead of the accreditation exam I tried to learn all the theory and keep the big picture in mind. The topics I had to prepare for the local training were very useful for the exam; everything we did for local training was actually practice for the exam and all pieces of the puzzle connected. And I wasn't nervous at all during the practical exam!

### ***As coordinator for Biblionet in Harghita County, what do you think are the most important benefits of the program?***

We applied for the first round of Biblionet because we felt the program would be the first time when our network of libraries would evolve as a system, and not as individual entities. Some renovation and improvement work had been done before the program started, but now it all seems to have a common purpose. Another reason was the librarians' training, because other attempts at bringing internet to rural communities failed for lack of proper technology training and support. Biblionet brought train-

ing on top of technology, and it made all the difference.

I have been working in the library for 16 years and this is also the first time I've seen local and central authorities involved in this kind of project. Our successes came in various packaging: I used to say that the cold was the main enemy of Harghita libraries. Some mayors had plans to heat their library in the future but they were in no real hurry. When we started explaining the opportunities of the Biblionet program, they reacted promptly. After having been frozen for decades, none of the 19 local libraries included in the program now have problems with heating.

Other mayors who were reluctant at first to sign the commitment letter for the Round 1 applications are now calling and asking where to sign. "There's always Round 2," we tell them. Local librarians were the most involved and eager to learn. They feel a sense of belonging because, by and large, being a rural librarian is a lonely profession. They were up at night studying for the course, and wanted to learn as much and be as professional as possible.

My hope for the future is that this network of libraries can be kept alive. Now everything is new and enthusiasm has soared—but I would not want to see this feeling fade away. Some people have internet access at home, but it cannot replace the library. We have in mind a number of ways of modernizing library services in general, because we see the library as a social space, where one can learn new things from not just books and online information but from other users. That cannot be done at home by oneself. It is important to have events organized in the library, not to separate technology from books, and to tell everybody—as often as we can—that all information sources are equally valuable and they can all contribute to a better understanding of the world.

Through these measures, ANBPR will practice its role as a promoter and advocate of the librarian profession, in the best way possible. In the spirit of respect towards authentic professional values, ANBPR will publicly express, any time needed, its position and reasoning concerning government decisions, which have an impact on the profession that the Association represents.

## ANBPR Reaches Out to Member Base at National Conference

Marking 20 years of activity, 150 librarians from across Romania gathered in Harghita County for the ANBPR's annual conference from October 28-31. With newly hired staff and a prominent role in the Biblionet program, the ANBPR conference focused on sharing the Association's new strategic plan and seeking feedback from librarians.



The conference followed a busy year in which the ANBPR members from across Romania brainstorm ideas at the Association's annual conference in which the Association completed its strategic planning process and hired executive staff to manage an operations department for the first time. The conference, titled "We are an Association: What's Next?" highlighted issues ranging from training and professional development to policy priorities for public libraries and the Association's organizational development. A major theme

was the desire for improved communication with and between the Association's members.

In order to generate new ideas and encourage participation from members, the conference included a "World Café" session in which participants rotated between small group tables discussing and collecting ideas on a number of prepared

topics.

The results of the brainstorming sessions and other feedback collected during the conference are being combined with formal surveys to inform a final development strategy that will guide the Association and its members over the next five years.

## "CIE: Center for Information and Education – With us, for us" Takes Top Honors in September-October CPC

On November 5, 2009, the CPC Panel evaluated the 10 projects competing in the September – October edition of the Community Participation Contest and selected "CIE: Center for Information and Education – With us, for us" as the overall winner.

Through this project, Maramures County Library will respond to the information needs of an underserved community of approximately 4,000 inhabitants in the Baia Mare city suburbs of Firiza, Valea Neagra, and Bli-dari. These three isolated neighborhoods are separated from Baia Mare city proper by the municipal reservoir. Because they are still under the jurisdiction of the Baia Mare City Hall, however, they are not legally entitled to have a local public library to serve their needs. The Maramures County

Library proposed opening a small information and documentation center to serve these communities, in partnership with a local NGO. The center will provide free internet access and serve as a small branch of the county library, providing some basic traditional library services. Like all CPC winners, the Maramures County Library will provide bi-weekly updates on project implementation on the [biblionet.ro](http://biblionet.ro) forum.



**CIE**  
**(CENTRU DE INFORMARE ȘI**  
**EDUCARE)**  
**– CU NOI ȘI PENTRU NOI**

Proiect realizat cu sprijinul financiar al International Research & Exchanges Board în urma câștigării Concursului de Participare Comunitară organizat în cadrul programului național:  
*"Biblionet – Lumea în biblioteca mea"*

Maramures County Library's winning project will bring internet access and library services to underserved communities in Baia Mare

## Librarian Fights for Information Services in Rural Commune: In Her Own Words

My name is Garofita Gasca, and I am the librarian of Agigea, a small rural community in Constanta County. I am 50 years old, a Leo by sign, and my whole life revolves around books.

This is the true story of a rural librarian, with many accomplishments and challenges. It all started one mellow late summer day, as there are many by the Black Sea coast where I live. I became a librarian in the fall of 1990, and I didn't realize then it was going to change my life. I knew very little about what a librarian did, but I liked reading and being informed about what was going on in the world.

My "library" was a 6' x 6' room in a basement. No heating, no toilet. But I had my ambition, so I bought gravel and cement and I asked my friends to help me, we poured concrete and made a floor for the library. At first, I had one shelf and one small table; then, books started to come from other libraries, so I had to learn how to organize them. I designed posters and ads to tell the people they had a new library in their village.

It all came to life because people wanted to borrow books. The county library also helped, they brought me more and more books.

Then, I started telling the mayor that the library was an important resource for his citizens and that I needed more books and new shelves. As we say, if a mayor pushes me out the door, I just go in back through the window, and always get what I know my readers want. So I got my new shelves, eight of them, but the room was too small. And there was no heat.

Nobody seemed to care about giving me a better room, but I decided I had to take one for the library, nonetheless. I brought rugs and curtains from home and turned the ugly room into a cozy and friendly space.

As luck would have it, the mayor changed, and the new one had no interest for the library. He wanted a pub instead. I went and told him my library was started from one book and I would fight him till kingdom come if he shut it down. I would not let go. And I also took library science courses, got myself a certificate, and came back to work with even more enthusiasm.

In 1996 I started a political career, because I felt that was the only way to achieve my goals. I had happy

times and bad times as a local councilor. It took a while until I managed to get my position, but I did, eventually. As politics can be a tricky business, eventually I gave up my position.

But I didn't give up explaining to the local council why the library is important for the community. When another mayor was elected, I continued to fight for the library. Fortunately, he was a former teacher, so he understood the importance of books and gave me funds to buy them. I also got a new stove, but I had to chop wood for it and do the cleaning. The county library appreciated my work and asked me for information in various domains and the library became my life. I set up partnerships with the local schools and daycare centers and attracted school children to take part in cultural and historical contests.

***"I was a bit scared that I would not be able to handle four computers, but ... I knew this was the future for my library. I was selected for Biblionet in the first round and went to the training courses."***

When the local council would not approve the new library organizational chart, I went to the local council meeting, I listened to them all and then started talking. The county library had appreciated my work as "excellent" during the past 10 years, and I used that as support for my speech. I showed them library records and what users said about the library, that no community can survive without its culture. When I finished, all 15 councilors voted for the organizational chart. I continued to do my work with many books and users from all walks of life.

The new mayor moved the library in the same building with the city hall. After 19 years as a librarian, I finally have a toilet.

When the county library told me that I could be part of Biblionet and get free access to Internet for the public, I jumped at the opportunity. I talked to the mayor and he was in favor of the project, and so was the local council.

I was a bit scared that I would not be able to handle four computers, but I could-



n't let anyone be better at this than me! I knew this was the future for my library. I was selected for Biblionet in the first round and went to the training courses.

I loved the training environment. I learned so many new things ... I still can't believe I'm using a computer, because I had no clue before. But I wrote this letter on my own!

Biblionet gives anybody who comes to the library the chance to access information for free, using the internet provided by the library. Once again, change came my way and I embraced it. I got the new computers on November 30.

Dear librarians! You need to show everybody how strong we are. Go to council meetings, say what you need to say and explain the importance of a good library for your community!

My only fear is that I will have to retire someday and no longer have my books. I know where each of them is, on what shelf, with my eyes closed. And I can't stop thinking that you should never forget to smile when users come to the library, that you should keep some candy at hand, for little children, and have the feeling that this is what you did for them, that you left something behind. What I leave behind is a library I started from one book and grew to 8,000 books, and a street named after me in Agigea, as a token of appreciation for my work in the community.

No bragging, just me, my library, my life ...

**Garofita Gasca, librarian  
Agigea Commune Library  
Constanta County**

## Development NGOs Grow out of Former CPC Projects



Paul Condrat, president of the Prodezvoltare Jurilovca 21 Association

In February and September 2009, two former coordinators of winning Community Participation Contest projects from 2007 launched local organizations to serve the needs of their communities in Jurilovca and Șimian.

Paul Condrat led implementation of the "CLIO - Center for Promoting Local Culture and Traditions of Jurilovca" project after his application won the CPC in November 2007. The project aimed to protect the rich cultural heritage of the Lipoveni community in Jurilovca, located in Tulcea County in the Danube delta region in eastern Romania. CLIO established a multilingual website (<http://www.bibliotecajurilovca.ro>), storing old slavonic documents and pictures in a digital archive and recording oral histories with the help of volunteers. Condrat is now the manager at RECL (The Electronic Network of the Local Community) Jurilovca and president of the Prodezvoltare Jurilovca 21 Association, created in September 2009.

Alexandru Ciorbă coordinated the December 2007 project winner "Infopitici" in Șimian, a border town in Bihor County in northeastern Romania. The project increased the use of new technologies by creating a small nucleus of local volunteers to provide basic computer training and assist school children, residents, and tourists in accessing information via the Internet at the local public library. Ciorbă, who is also the manager of RECL Șimian, created the PRO ȘIMIAN organization in February 2009.

Condrat and Ciorbă recently shared their experience establishing a new NGO in a small community.

### **Why have you created an NGO in your community?**

**Paul Condrat:** There was a local need. We had already been working in the public administration for four years. The target of this particular service – The Electronic Network of the Local Community ("RECL") – is to develop the community over four layers, including education, culture, social, and economics. The purpose of the Association is to complement the public administration. But there are many projects, particularly smaller ones, that the Local Council finds hard to implement because of technical complexities, budget constraints, and the public administration members in general. I set up Prodezvoltare Jurilovca 21 to support RECL and make decisions more efficiently, although on some topics (such as organizing the Days of Jurilovca festival) our large and complex structure yields a lot of ideas but lengthy discussions.

**Alexandru Ciorbă:** We had several reasons. Șimian is rather underdeveloped in economic terms, therefore the funds for cultural activities are very modest. When we were looking for non-reimbursable funding sources, we understood that the library – having no legal personality and being subordinated to the mayor's office – cannot have access to such funding, because in most cases municipalities and rural mayors' offices cannot submit project proposals themselves. But we also saw how successful other associations had been, so we realised the possibilities that a civic association may have in supporting these projects independently.

### **Who are the main partners of the newly created NGO? Why did they join your cause and how do you work them?**

**PC:** Apart from the mayor's office, we don't have any other formal partnerships right now, but we have already started some discussions. One of our priorities is to encourage the development of tourism in our community, and we hope to be able to leverage the input of local tourist service suppliers too (individuals or agencies), be-

cause they will be the direct beneficiaries. Moreover, organizations like the Razelm Fish Farmers' Association were our partners in the Days of Jurilovca and will continue to be partners in, and beneficiaries of, future projects as well.

**AC:** I have to mention, above all, the Șimian mayor's office, which has already supported many of our cultural initiatives (such as the Days of Șimian, the "Meeting on the border" project, and an international folk dance festival on December 29th). We always cooperate with the "Kazinczy Ferenc" elementary school in Șimian whenever activities involve children. Another partner is Asociația Carpatină Ardeleană in Bihor County, with whom we designed a project covering extra-curricular environmental education in our commune. We cooperate for organizational issues most of the time, but sometimes on financial matters too—it just depends on the situation.

### **What problems are you looking to tackle and what have been your biggest achievements so far?**

**PC:** We do not have a to-do list. Identifying needs and problems takes time, and we are still a young organization. However, the possibility of diversifying the Jurilovca economy from fishing to rural tourism presents a lot of opportunities. Our biggest accomplishment may be a project to build a visiting route and to install guide signs for visitors to the Orgame-Argamum archaeological site on Cape Doloșman. We are just awaiting funding from the French Embassy.

**AC:** We have tried to be realistic in everything that we have done. Our achievements have been associated with local culture thus far. Notably, we reprinted the autobiography of a historic village resident, Frater Lorand (1872-1930), who composed local folk music. We managed to edit some old gramophone records featuring his voice, recorded back in 1928, and

## Ocnele Mari Library Celebrates Biblionet Participation with Ribbon Cutting

*Continued from Page 1*

about librarians. They are servants of information, guides of dreams, and work for everyone. So the success of the program relies on librarians, and I would like to thank them all for their effort."

The success of Biblionet hinges on the involvement and support of local government officials. Valcea County Council President Ion Cilea emphasized the role that the council played in the program application process, securing county funding and the support of local mayors. "Together with library managers, I lobbied hard for this program. Our mayors do not turn their backs on libraries; every community in our county hires a full-time librarian. With their desire to offer new

services in addition to books, the Biblionet program is a perfect fit."

Ocnele Mari Mayor Petre Iordache, also a supporter of the library's participation, reflected on local efforts to meet Biblionet program requirements. "We invested 50,000 lei [US\$17,000] to modernize and renovate this building, because that was the first condition the municipality had to meet before being accepted to the program. We promised we would do that and we kept our promise, so today we're here to cut the ribbon." Looking ahead to the role that internet access and modern services will play in bringing in new library users, Iordache said, "Going forward, some of the major responsibilities will fall on the local communities. Because we want young people to have more access to the libraries, local librarians will work in two shifts."

Ministry of Culture representative Alexandru Balaşescu focused on the impor-

tance of the technical training that Biblionet provides, "I believe that the human capital has always been the most important one in this program. Owning a computer is not enough; we also need to know how to use it. It is not the screen that matters, but the person in front of it."

In the first round of the Biblionet program, 103 computers were installed in libraries across Valcea County. In all, 20 commune and municipal libraries in Valcea have been equipped for participation in the program, including: Babeni, Calimanesti, Cernisoara, Daesti, Diculesti, Glavile, Gradistea, Horezu, Muereasca, Nicolae Balcescu, Ocnele Mari, Pietrari, Popesti, Scundu, Sirineasa, Stanesti, Tetoiu, Tomsani, Vaideeni, and Voineasa.

## Former CPC Project Coordinators Found Local NGOs

*Continued from Page 5*

store them on CDs available in the market.

**How will you measure success for your organization in the next five years?**

**PC:** I would want to see if local tourist services had grown significantly. I would like to see that at least one house on every street in Jurilovca is a guesthouse.

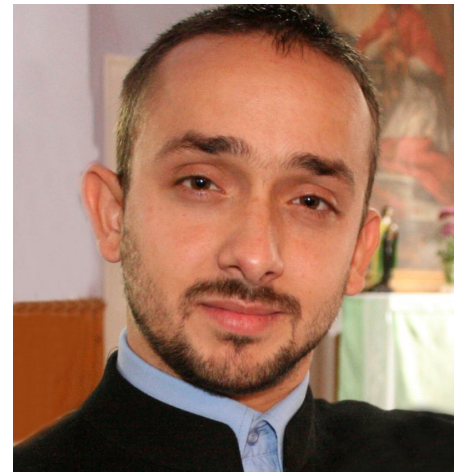
**AC:** We want to recruit as many volunteers as possible. We will consider ourselves successful in five years' time if we have given something back to the local people every month: released a new book, or ran a cultural or sports program, etc.

**How would you advise a similar community that plans to set up an NGO to address local issues?**

**PC:** The biggest issue so far has been associated to the actual creation of the organization, because of the large number of founders. I would recommend starting with only a few founders, because there are some procedures involving the presence of all founders, either in front of a notary, or to get a tax certificate. It is hard to mobilize a large group of people within short notice.

**AC:** Associations should not want to solve every problem; they should be realistic and patient. Results will not turn out straight away, especially when you work with people! The most important thing to

remember is that this work involves failure too; we must learn from our setbacks.



Alexandru Ciorba, head of PRO SIMIAN

## Librarians, Authorities in Harghita to Use Internet Access to Spur Local Growth

*Continued from Page 1*

train users to navigate the internet, write emails, access informative websites, and promote culture in general."

Internet access will help link the remote commune, with nine villages and roughly 5,000 inhabitants stretching over several valleys in the Ghimes area, to the rest of Harghita County. In preparation for the opening, Lunca de Jos librarians tested a Skype connec-

tion with the County Library in Miercurea Ciuc.

County Councillor Arpad Racz, who spent the early years of his life in Lunca de Jos, emphasized the role of the newly-equipped library in building the local knowledge economy. "We are pleased that, with the help of the Biblionet program, isolated and marginalized communities will have an opportunity to enjoy free access to the internet. Human resource development is a

County Council priority and local institutions, like public libraries, are ideal vehicles in this sense. The Biblionet program helps us meet those goals by providing both equipment and training."

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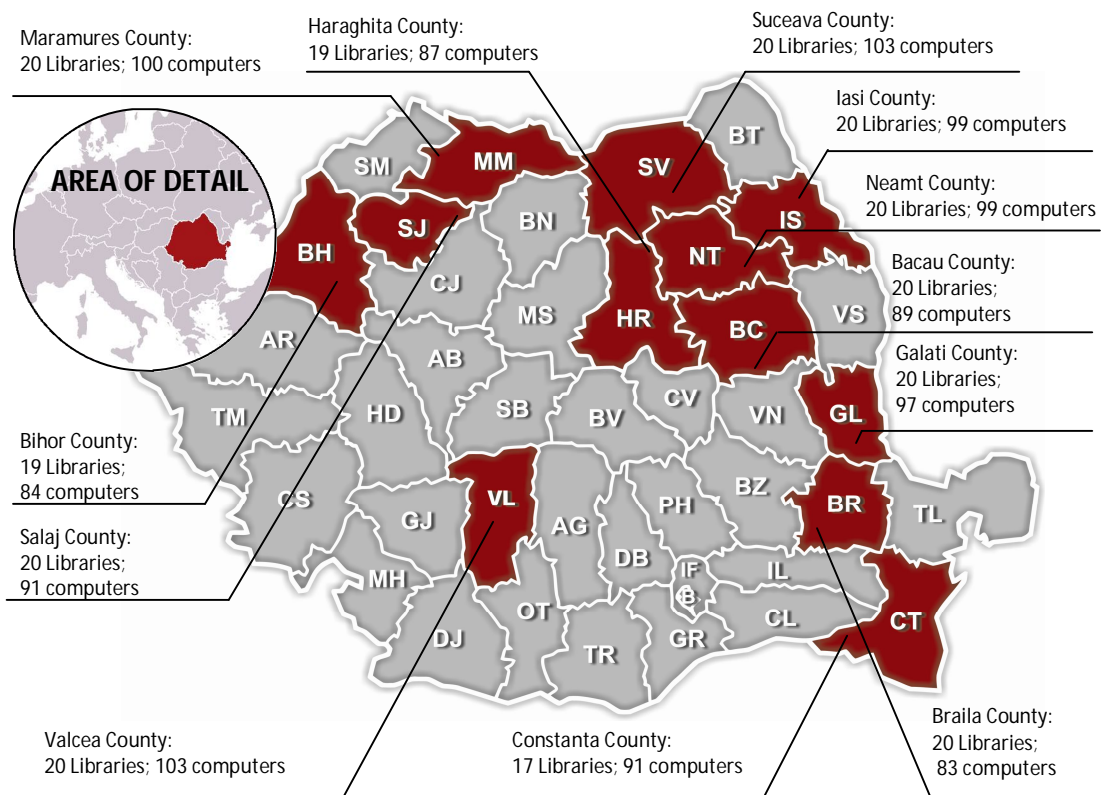
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**Biblionet Round 1: A Closer Look**



*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.*

**RESULTS**

- 12 counties
- 235 libraries
- 994 computers
- 12 certified technical trainers
- More than \$600,000 invested in providing internet access and modern library services to Romanians
- Supported by the Ministry of Culture, County Councils, and hundreds of local mayors

**IREX Announces Launch of Round 2 of Biblionet**

On November 25, 2009, IREX officially launched Round 2 of the Biblionet program for all interested county libraries. In this round, IREX will select 18 county libraries, with a network of no fewer than 10 and no more than 20 local public libraries (at the municipal, city, and / or communal level). In all, more than 300 local and county public libraries will become partners of the Biblionet program.

In preparation of Round 2 applications, Biblionet Director Paul Baran was invited to speak to groups of librarians at outreach events

in Sibiu, Mures, Prahova and Teleorman counties. During these informational meetings, IREX representatives explained the application process, discussed minimum eligibility requirements, and presented the program to local authorities and media.