

March 2010

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Minister Kelemen: New Policies, Investment will Revive Public Library System

On February 4 in Bucharest, Minister of Culture and National Heritage Hunor Kelemen affirmed the value of public libraries in Romanian society and committed to a policy agenda that will ultimately strengthen the library sector.

Kelemen's remarks were a part of a national panel discussion titled "The New Face of Romanian Public Libraries: The Role of Libraries in Community Development" an event hosted by the Minister of Culture and Deborah Jacobs, Director of the Global Libraries Initiative at the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and facilitated by TV and radio personality Marian Voicu.

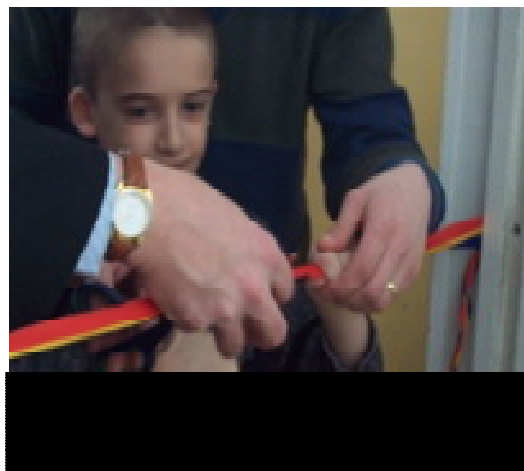
Mr. Kelemen stated that the national government will support libraries by initiating and



implementing policies and strategies meant to revive the Romanian public library system: "These policies aim at repositioning public libraries in the life of local communities and in villages, communes and small towns, especially where there are no higher education branches. This program shows what can be

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Regional Journal: Young and Old Benefit from new Internet Service in Maramures County



How are both young and old residents finding common uses for new library services in Romania? In Baia Sprie, a rural community in Maramures County that is participating in the Biblionet program, we found that people of all generations are learning new ways to use their community's new library resources.

On March 2, we arrived at the Baia Sprie library to officially welcome the community to the Biblionet program. It was 1 in the afternoon and Bogdan, a young boy waiting to use the new computers, was ready for the event

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New Library Resource Portal Supports European eSkills Week 2010

As part of Romania's participation in the European eSkills Week 2010 campaign, the www.e-aptitudini.ro portal went live on Monday, March 1.

The portal was launched by a consortium of international organizations in Romania in October 2009 as a response to the European eSkills campaign's focus on the role that technology skills will play in Europe's economic recovery. An International Data Corporation survey titled, "Post-crisis: e-Skills are needed to Drive Europe's Innovation Society" confirmed that over the next five years in Romania, 90% of the jobs in every field will involve some level of IT knowledge, which will demand IT training sessions and IT education as a priority for all employers.

Public libraries have an increasingly critical role to play as Romanians look to develop new job skills. Among the www.e-aptitudini.ro portal's most useful resources is the "Librarian's Kit," a collection of resources and guides for

public librarians to help meet library users informational needs. Dragos Adrian Neagu, the first vice-president of the National Association of Public Librarians and Libraries (ANBPR) in Romania, explained the association's role in the project and how the initiative will benefit librarians: "When librarians attend the courses and manage to get the information from this kit, they will gain digital literacy skills. County libraries or larger city libraries already provide internet access to the public. But most of the 3,000 small libraries in this country, in rural and small urban communities, have never had this chance. I believe that the impact of training received by librarians through this portal will mean a new step in training for users. The Librarian's Kit includes 350 interactive tutorials for Microsoft Office 2007 applications in Romanian, therefore addressing the needs of most users."

The portal, www.e-aptitudini.ro, is a

resource visitors can use to shape their skill set for personal and professional advancement. The site is also an important guide for all, regardless of age, education, or profession. The database includes diverse resources including courses and educational resources that are available nationwide to train and improve the skills people need in order to incorporate IT technology into their daily lives.

The www.e-aptitudini.ro portal is supported by the following organizations: Junior Achievement Romania, Nadia Comaneci Foundation, Educating for an Open Society Foundation (ESO), Civitas Foundation for the Civil Society, the ecentre.ro network (Get Online Day!), the Association of the IT&C Equipment Producers and Distributors in Romania, EurActiv, the National Association of the Public Librarians and Libraries in Romania, Biblionet, and Microsoft Romania.

Telecentre-Europe: Supporting eSkills Through Online Dialogue

Telecentre-Europe supported "eSkills Week" by bringing together over 10,000 people across Europe virtually. Among the events that took place during the eSkills Week (March 1 through 5) was *Get Online Day*, a campaign that involved 15 countries coordinated by Telecentre-Europe. The campaign—often referred to as *Hai pe net!* ("Come on over Internet!") in Romania—took place on March 4, 2010 and involved over 100 communities from 20 countries.

The aim of the participating libraries, e-centers, and public internet access centers was to attract as many individuals as possible to the event—many of whom were using the internet for the first time. The activities that local organizers planned recognized specific needs in each community and the initiatives focused on raising awareness surrounding the benefits of direct access to information.

The 1,000 people who logged online for the first time, in addition to over 5,000 others using the Internet in telecenter locations nationwide had the opportunity to search employment opportunities and

chat with friends and relatives who live far away. *Get Online Day* connected participants to the global community via the internet.

Discussing the event beforehand, Gabriela Barna, Director of the EOS Foundation and coordinator of *Hai pe net!* Campaign described how the gathering would be coordinated. "All of the hits will be counted by a special application in real time. All of the participating countries will do so simultaneously."

The program is supported by the EOS Foundation, that partners with Biblionet, ANBPR, the Microsoft Unlimited Potential Programme, and the World Bank's Knowledge Economy project.



For more information, please contact Gabriela Barna, EOS Foundation - Educating for an Open Society, Timișoara, 0256/498 172, 0744/770 687, gabi.barna@eos.ro.

Minister of Culture Kelemen Welcomes Library Visitors in Harghita County

On February 13, the Commune Library of Carta, Harghita became one of the most recent libraries to join the Biblionet program offering new, free services to the public. The new library was inaugurated at an event featuring Minister of Culture Hunor Kelemen and Carta mayor Tibor Gabor.

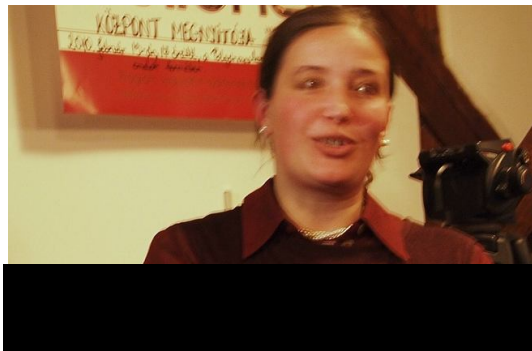
At the event, Carta librarian Anna Kozma described the way the community had come together to participate in the Biblionet program. The small commune has been hit hard by the recession, and struggled to find a librarian to replace Kozma temporarily while she goes on maternity leave. One of the conditions of participating in the Biblionet program is that each library have at least one full-time librarian, however the local budget could not support hiring additional staff. Kozma met with Mayor Tibor Gabor to figure out a solution and the two agreed to temporarily relocate the library in to the town hall, where one of the mayor's staff could operate the library on an interim basis.

Affirming Carta's commitment to improving local library service and participating in the Biblionet program, Mayor Tibor Gabor noted, "I gave up my own office space to accommodate the library as the cultural house, where the library is usually located is under renovation."

Minister Kelemen described some of the challenges currently facing the library

system as communities now expect more than just book lending from a public library. Romanian libraries are responding by reaching out with new services—just like those being offered at the Carta library.

The Carta library is part of the growing network of Biblionet libraries. Through the second round of the Biblionet program, another 13 Harghita libraries will receive technology investments and librarian training.



Global Libraries Director Witnesses Changes in Libraries

Deborah Jacobs, Director of the Global Libraries Initiative, visited Romania the first week of February. She emphasized: "When we chose Romania to be part of the Global Libraries program, we thought about two things: the need to create a modern public library system and means of supporting this investment once funding is no longer available. I first visited Romania 18 months ago and I can tell you there have been some awesome changes. Librarians have more faith and professional pride, while patrons can find services in libraries they couldn't a while ago." Ms. Jacobs and Ms. Siri Oswald, the Gates Foundation Program Officer for Romania held meetings with central and local gov-

ernment representatives, the ANBPR, National Library and private businesses during the trip.

On Wednesday February 3, Ms. Jacobs and the director of Biblionet program Paul Andre Baran, held a press conference at the Suceava County Library, together with library director Gabriel Carabus. Here, modern services in the municipal library of Vatra Dornei were inaugurated, as organized by librarian Mariana Sorohan and mayor Ioan Moraru. Community leaders and library patrons were also present at the event and they described various activities and the most interesting events held in the library.

Biblionet National Panel

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done for Romania with a significant amount of money, but also with good ideas coming to life. It is our duty for the following years to add content to this national program."

As the panelists noted, modern public libraries offer many services in addition to book lending including offering online citizen services, public-private partnerships, and community and economic development resources.

Jacobs described how libraries must reinvent themselves, as the impact of technology and the need for information make libraries even more relevant across the globe. "In order for public libraries to be ground zero in a community, librarians should learn how to promote their services and be proud of their profession," urged Jacobs during the panel discussion.

Panelists also addressed the major hurdles currently facing the Romanian library system, particularly in rural areas. The lack of appropriate space, outdated collections, and a lack of funds for book acquisitions are only a few of the many obstacles to overcome. "Lack of space for public libraries is the most difficult issue at the moment!" said Mr. Sergiu Gabureac, of the Bucharest Metropolitan Library.

Addressing this concern, Biblionet Director Paul Andre Baran noted that the investments currently being made through the program provide a unique advocacy opportunity for all librarians. "Equipment donation and training courses funded through the Biblionet program can show local authorities that the public library is an important place for citizens and can open the way to become a true information, education and social center for each community."

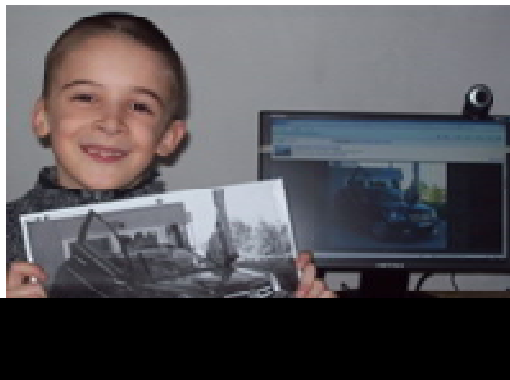
The panel event came in the midst of an important juncture in the life of Romania's public library system. More than 200 public libraries have recently joined the Biblionet program to receive new technology and training, with another 500 libraries slated to join the program later this year.

Regional Journal: Young and Old Benefit from new internet service in Maramures



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to begin. After the formal introductions and thank-yous, Bogdan was asked to “take charge” of a new computer. He immedi-



ately accepted.

Someone asked Bogdan to find an image of his favorite car. With a big smile on his face, Bogdan conducted a quick search and said “that’s the one!” pointing at a Mercedes on the screen and nearly pushing the monitor off the table with his finger.

After printing a picture of his favorite car Bogdan showed it to other library visitors. “My dream race car!” he said.

Two days later, we visited the library again to see how the new technology was being used. We met Vasile Pop, a 60-year-old library user who has spent his life as a horticulturist. Pop lives outside of Baia Sprie in a rural community and learned about the new library services through the local newspaper.

A scrapbook filled with old childhood photos accompanying him, this was Pop’s first visit to the library. After signing up for a library card and getting help from the librarian to use the scanner, Pop used the connection to speak with friends.

“What a marvel!” Pop said. “I had been waiting for so long to speak with my childhood friends, and former classmates. I had not heard from some of them for about 20 years. But today I could speak to them through the Internet and email them some old scanned photos, beautiful memories from our past times.”

Once he finished chatting with old friends, Pop saved his new photo collection on a pen drive and a CD saying, “I will have these forever! They are not going to break or fade away, like paper does.”

This being his first library visit, Pop also had some reading to catch up on. “I also checked out this book, I found some interesting information, this is going to be quite helpful during my summer work. If I need information which is not in the books, then I will also look it up on the Internet.”



Preparing Librarians for Community Leadership

Realizing that the success or failure of any library lies largely with the skills and initiative of the librarian, Biblionet is investing heavily in training to help librarians develop skills and competencies that will allow them to realize their ambitions. Librarian training is the backbone for the sustainability of the Biblionet program and for the future development of the public library sector.

As we conclude the first complete training cycle for round one libraries, we’re assessing the program, identifying what worked and what did not, and making adjustments in preparation for the second round, slated to begin this summer.

The development of librarian trainers – from recruitment and selection through co-training and mentoring – turned out a group of qualified, enthusiastic trainers. We believe they now have the skills to develop courses for their own county library systems and to serve as resources for all librarians in their region.

The training course focused primarily on familiarizing libraries with technology, and strategizing on how to incorporate technology into library services. Librarians responded positively to this material and showed impressive gains in knowledge during the five day course. Librarians reported that the course covered the competences and the knowledge needed to begin offering public access to the internet, and felt prepared to assist their patrons in using computers.

Additionally, participants demonstrated a positive attitude and higher level of confidence related to managing libraries endowed with computers; they felt that their stature in the community would increase and that they would have a better satisfaction when performing their job.

For the second round of training, some adjustments are being made. The training of trainers will expand from five to 10 days to allow librarian trainers more time to practice training techniques. IREX has also developed a

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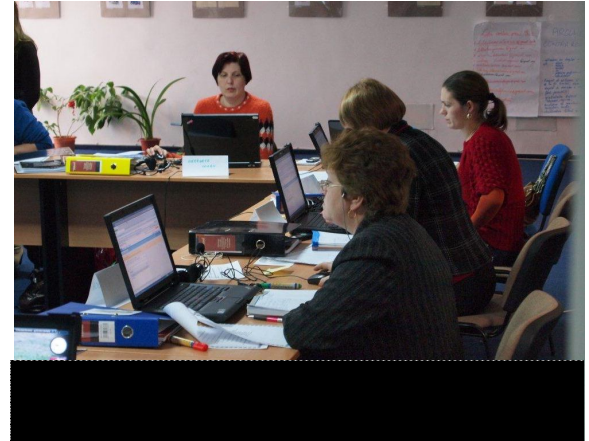
IREX is an international nonprofit organization providing leadership and innovative programs to improve the quality of education, strengthen independent media, and foster pluralistic civil society development. Founded in 1968, IREX works in more than 50 countries.

Preparing Librarians for Community Leadership

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second course for librarians that will focus on project planning and developing new library services.

After one year of the project, 239 librarians have been trained in IT and library management, 24 librarians have taken their certification as accredited trainers, and 12 training labs are fully operational. As the training program progresses, more and more librarians will have the knowledge and resources to incorporate technology into their libraries to the benefit of their communities.



Year One Training Program:

Training Centers: Each county has one coordinator and two trainers.

The coordinator oversees local program administration; trainers deliver the Biblionet courses.

Training of Trainers: Trainers went through an extensive development process, including: a training of trainers course, a mentoring period with an EOS trainer, and delivering parts of the initial course along with an EOS trainers.

Core Course: The course was created in response to objectives identified during the training needs analysis. IREX's training department and Educating for an Open Society (EOS) worked together to develop the course, and EOS trainers delivered the course with the help of the two county librarian trainers.

CPC Update: February 2010 Winner Announced

The winner of the most recent CPC is *Promovam traditia privind spre viitor* (Promoting tradition by looking into the future), a joint project proposed by the Suncuius Communal Library and *Grupul pentru un Viitor Verde* Association (The Group for a Greener Future). Located in eastern Bihor County where the economy has been hit hard by the loss of industry jobs, this CPC project will coordinate local efforts to revitalize the community through tourism.

The Group for a Greener Future has worked with youth for more than four years, organizing

adventure camps to improve the field of tourism. During that time however, the region has seen increased tourism that has been disorganized and damaging to the local environment without appreciating the area's culture. Over four months, the project will train locals to promote their region through a network of eco-tourism blogs. Participants will be trained in basic computer literacy and online tools. The project will also create an associated youth group that will research and design three themed tour routes that local eco-tourism businesses will be able to use to attract visitors.