

Update

Rebuilding Iraqi Library Collections

The Harvard University Library and Sabre are collaborating on a joint proposal to strengthen library collections at several Iraqi universities and the National Library, and a search for funding is underway.

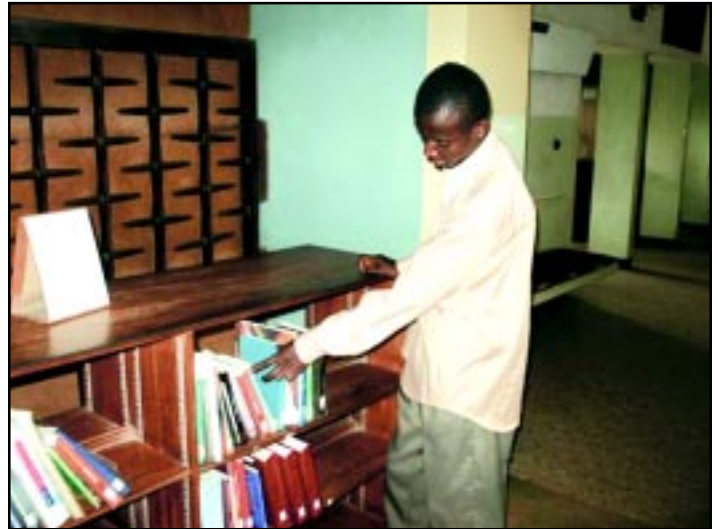
Iraq's library and information services, like the country's broader infrastructure, have suffered decades of neglect followed by post-combat damage through looting and vandalism. Basic library services, the capacity to meet new information needs, the training of professionals in contemporary technologies, and the reconstruction of the country's academic collections all demand attention.

The Harvard/Sabre plan calls for the formation of core collections of the best works available in print on two subjects critical to Iraq today: democracy and democratization (about 300 titles), and the ecology of water and related topics (100-150 titles). The Harvard Library is assembling a bibliography on each subject, in consultation with recognized specialists in those fields. Librarians and academics in Iraq and expatriate professionals will also help in identifying collections needs and priorities beyond those on Harvard's preliminary list.

Sabre's role will be in handling the practicalities of acquisition (mostly by purchase, some by donation), OCLC cataloguing, warehousing, packing and shipping the collections, drawing on its broad experience in book donation programs around the world. The collections will be offered to some 20 Iraqi libraries, and The Iraqi Reconstruction... (*cont'd on page 3*)

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A student at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, peruses a selection of books, part of the collection of the Kenneth Dike Library on the campus of the university.

MacArthur Grant Will Assist Four Nigerian Universities

The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation has awarded Sabre a grant to fund a three-year program of book and CD-ROM donations to four Nigerian universities. This will be an important element in the consortium plan of four U.S. foundations (Carnegie, Ford, MacArthur and Rockefeller) to strengthen the resources of universities in sub-Saharan Africa. Local NGOs (the Awka-based Nigerian Book Foundation and the Kano-based Northern Book Trust) and the universities themselves will serve as active Sabre partners in Nigeria. (The on-site needs assessment underlying Sabre's proposal was featured in our Winter 2003/2004 Update.)

Sabre's first shipment of books will go to the University of Ibadan in southwest Nigeria. This will be followed by shipments to the universities of Port Harcourt, Bayero and Ahmadu Bello. Sabre's program will be coordinated from the Cambridge office by Ray Huling, Book Donation Program Officer. Over the three-year period, about 80 per cent of the books shipped will be multiple copies of text and reference books, with a variety of monographs from Harvard and Yale university presses making up the other 20 per cent.

Algerian Book Fair



Representatives of Sabre's Algerian partner FOREM with Secretary Charles Getchell, at the feet of John Harvard, Cambridge.

Sabre is planning to be represented at the Algiers International Book Fair in mid September, by Ray Huling, Book Donation Program Officer.

Sabre's booth will be shared with its Algerian NGO partner, FOREM, headed by Professor Mostefa Khiati (above, second from left), and will help publicize the aid work of the two organizations. (Last year's fair attracted 70,000 visitors and 450 exhibitors — 74 from Algeria and 376 from abroad.)

The Sabre exhibit will also showcase the contribution of the U.S. book publishing industry to worldwide education and mutual understanding. The Association of American Publishers (AAP) will provide reading promotion posters and other materials for the venue, where few American publishers will actually be present. "We welcome the opportunity to be represented at this event through Sabre Foundation's participation," said Patricia Schroeder, President and CEO of AAP. The Association of American University Presses (AAUP) is also providing materials on the AAUP's "Books for Understanding" initiative.

The Fair will also offer an occasion for FOREM to distribute part of Sabre's next shipment of books and educational materials for children.

Dar es Salaam Workshop

Sabre officers and delegates from ten sub-Saharan African partner organizations will meet in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, during the week of September 13 for a conference and workshop hosted by the Tanzania Book Support Trust (TBST). The countries to be represented are Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda.

The meeting will aim to build upon the successes of the first conference/workshop of Sabre's African partners, held in Accra, Ghana, in January 2002 ("Dialogue of African Partners"). A full report on that 2002 conference can be found at www.sabre.org/dap.html, including the text of the Accra Declaration on the mission and aspirations of Sabre's African partners.

The September workshop will introduce four new partners and will continue the conversations on program sustainability, guidelines for responsible book donation initiatives, (or "Best Practices"), and support for indigenous publishing. Three days of meetings will be followed by two days of "hands-on" computer training.

In addition to Sabre and its African partners, other invitees include representatives from the Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE), Book Aid International (UK), the MacArthur Foundation (see cover story), the "American Corners" program (see below) and the U.S. Embassy in Tanzania.

Sabre Participates in "American Corners" Initiative

Sabre was represented by Executive Director Tania Vitvitsky at two workshops organized by the Department of State — in Amman, Jordan, in December, and in Pretoria, South Africa, in March — to discuss the establishment and management of several "American Corners" libraries in Africa and the Middle East. The "American Corners" initiative will add a new dimension to U.S. public diplomacy through formal partnerships between American embassies or consulates and host country institutions. The aim is to make information about the United States available to a broad cross section of foreign audiences in both capital cities and outlying provincial areas. Book collections, including donations by Sabre, will lay the foundation for an American Corner, but these information outposts can offer a wide array of resources:

- reference desks modeled on American public library service
- open shelf access to multi-media collections of books, U.S. public documents, periodicals, CD-ROMs and videos on American history, society and culture
- information on doing business in/with the U.S.
- English language instruction materials
- student advising materials
- supervised Internet access

An American Corner will also serve as a multi-purpose program platform:

- site for lectures and exhibits
- venue for locally generated programs (American film series, ESL classes, educational advising, America Day activities)
- meeting place for U.S. government program alumni and grantees, and travelling government officials

Sabre's participation is an example of the public/private sector collaboration that will leverage the Department of State's funding of the American Corners initiative.

Next Afghan Shipment Will Help Doctors, Nurses and Medical Students

Sabre's second shipment to Afghanistan is scheduled for this summer: much-needed medical books destined for the Mir Wais Hospital in Kandahar, as well as for other facilities in the southern part of the country, including the Helmand, Uruzagan and Zabul hospitals and Kandahar University. Sabre will ship the 20-foot ocean freight container to Karachi, Pakistan, from where a collaborating Dutch NGO, Stichting Groningen Help!, will help move it into Afghanistan. (On this occasion, Sabre will purchase the actual container itself, as the shipping company is unsure of retrieving it from Kandahar.)

Sabre's first Afghan shipment travelled via Uzbekistan and in early 2003 reached the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif, from where the books were successfully distributed throughout the country. Both shipments have been made possible by proceeds from a benefit auction of donated advertising space conducted at the annual meeting of the Association of American University Presses (AAUP), for which Sabre is most grateful.

Sabre has also been pleased to serve as the conduit of contributions from U.S. donors supporting the construction and furnishing of the Esteghlal school, an elementary/high school for some 5,000 students in Mazar-e-Sharif. In a future Afghan book shipment, Sabre plans to include English language texts for the 1,200 students there in the 7th through 12th grades.



A class for girls at an elementary school in the town of Parrakh in the Panjshir Valley, in northern Afghanistan.

Boston-area Librarians Form "Friends of Sabre"

The driving force behind the formation of a new "Friends of Sabre" volunteer support group is Betty Falsey, Readers' Services Librarian at Harvard's Houghton Library. The volunteers have provided valuable help at the Cambridge office preparing smaller-scale, targeted book donations, thus enabling Sabre's busy Lawrence warehouse staff to focus on their heavy schedule of ocean-freight container shipments.

The original roster of "Friends" has been made up of Betty's colleagues at Houghton, including Susan Halpert, Reference Librarian; Melanie Wisner, Manuscript Cataloguer; Caroline Duroselle-Melish, Assistant Curator, and Irina Tarsis, Curatorial Assistant, both in the Department of Printing and Graphic Arts; and Belkacem Nahi, Library Assistant, Technical Services Department. Sabre hopes to enlist more volunteers from Boston-area libraries (active or retired) to join the group. Teams will be working in Lawrence as well as in Cambridge, and will not only help Sabre's mission but will also, we hope, have fun doing it. Anyone interested in learning more should contact Betty Falsey at falsey@fas.harvard.edu.

After learning about Sabre from Cambridge Children's Librarian Daryl Mark, Betty joined the Africa Advisory Committee. In August 2003, she travelled to Kagadi, in western Uganda, to visit a new Sabre partner, the Uganda Rural Development & Training Programme (URDT), and went on to visit the Tanzania Book Support Trust, Sabre's partner in Dar es Salaam. (See the Winter 2003/2004 Update.)

Rebuilding Iraqi Library Collections

(cont'd from page 1) ...Initiative (IRI) will act as Sabre's subcontractor to receive and distribute the books.

A coordinating group, based on Harvard's Committee for Iraqi Libraries, will serve as a multinational and apolitical clearing-house of information and an adviser on additional core bibliographies (on topics such as economics, engineering and technology, and librarianship and information science).

As this Update goes to press, Sabre has just been awarded a grant from the US Institute of Peace in Washington, DC, for three sub-components of the democracy and democratization subject category: constitutional design; multi-ethnic and multi-religious states; and truth and reconciliation processes.

Staff News

Sabre welcomes **Leslie Marsh**, who started work in early August as Program Development Officer in the Cambridge office. He will be concentrating on broadening the funding base for the Foundation's fast growing Book Donation Program. Leslie has been acquainted with Sabre's work since 2001, when he organized the inaugural conference of the Michael Oakeshott Association (MOA) in London, and was elected its first secretary-treasurer. (The MOA began under the aegis of Sabre's Philosophy of Institutions Project to bring together—through conferences, publications, and the Internet—people from many countries interested in the work of the late English political philosopher. It is now an independent entity.)

Leslie's interest in, and understanding of, public policy issues are underpinned by a strong academic background in philosophy, politics and sociology. He did his undergraduate studies at Evergreen State College in Washington, and has graduate degrees from the University of London and Oxford. His career in the UK has been in banking and management consulting.

Tim Nikula, former Sabre Program Officer, is currently living in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, along with his wife Allie. Both are recent graduates of the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. Tim continues to work on Sabre projects and is also acting as a project manager for an American construction company. Allie is the country director for Human Rights Watch.

Sabre's Book Donation Philosophy

Sabre Foundation's Book Donation Program is valued by overseas NGOs because of Sabre's steadfast adherence to the policy that when it comes to the educational needs of developing and transitional countries, indigenous organizations know best. The keystone of Sabre's book program is that it is demand-driven. Rather than trying to send as many books as possible, regardless of demonstrated need, Sabre gives its overseas partners the opportunity to select books and CD-ROMs from detailed inventory offering lists that are sent electronically. Only titles and quantities specifically requested by its partners are shipped by Sabre. Those titles are new, high-quality, up-to-date books selected by Sabre from the offerings made by donating publishers. In the selection process, Sabre's rule of thumb is that something which is of no value in the U.S. is usually equally valueless overseas. The schools, universities, libraries and individuals that benefit from Sabre's Book Donation Program are not regarded as the recipients of aid for whom "any book is better than no book at all." They are regarded instead as clients with limited resources.

* * *

Sabre is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization under the U.S. Internal Revenue Code, and is registered as a Private Voluntary Organization with the U.S. Agency for International Development. Contributions (fully tax-deductible) are welcomed at the address below or online at www.sabre.org.

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HUMANITARIAN AID FOR THE MIND:

Sabre Helps Liberians Rebuild Schools and Libraries After Years of Devastating Civil Conflict

An axiom of Sabre's Book Donation Program is that it exists to serve the needy. But nowhere in the world today is that adjective more poignantly defined than in the West African Republic of Liberia, as its people work to repair the devastation caused by fifteen years of civil war.

Sabre's partner in that country for the past six years has been Church-Related Development Organization of Liberia, Inc. (CREDO), based in Monrovia and ably managed by Executive Director William Harris. In January 1999, CREDO received Sabre's first consignment of over 12,000 text and reference books and instructional kits, for distribution to 125 institutions of learning around the country.

Four more shipments have followed since then, totalling 52,400 books valued at \$1.1 million. (The contents of one container were derailed in the spring of 2003 by looting during three rounds of intense fighting, which vandalized CREDO's central office and its three satellite facilities. In the same period of heightened conflict, many schools and libraries were also vandalized.)



Cuttington University College librarian and staff member shelve books donated by the CREDO/Sabre Book Program at the Sinkor Monrovia warehouse of the college. The main library in Suacoco was looted during the fighting in 2003.



Cross-section of the 11th grade students of the Adventist High School making use of the books donated by CREDO/Sabre Book Program in class.

But the most recent shipment, received in December 2003, was successfully distributed to 117 institutions, benefiting 12,637 pupils and 612 instructors. This latest consignment contained 17,200 assorted books, including medical, engineering and computer science texts, as well as encyclopedias, dictionaries, almanacs, and other reference works, with a fair market value of \$336,000. (The distribution itself was accomplished across four counties in four weeks, in spite of extensive infrastructure damage, but the preceding three months were needed for clearing customs, recruiting volunteers, readying the warehouse and supplies, and sorting, stamping and repacking the books.)

Because of the destruction and dislocation of civil society in Liberia, the task of educating its young people has been largely assumed by parochial and private institutions, including six of the seven leading Liberian universities.

In a recent comprehensive report to Book Donation Program Manager Colin McCullough and his colleagues, CREDO's director William Harris eloquently described the challenges confronting Liberia's educational system, and why the continued help of organizations like Sabre is essential:

"The 'book problem' in Liberia is critical. There is a virtual book famine. Students, teachers, school administrators, and communities in Liberia are 'bookrupt.' Students learn without the prescribed textbooks. Reference materials are difficult to access. Libraries are pseudo."



Students of G.S. Jones Elementary School, Gardenersville, one of 88 schools in Montserrado County, with over 9,000 pupils benefiting from the CREDO/Sabre book donations.



A group of pupils of the M. Sungu Cooper Primary School, Capitol By-Pass, Monrovia, reading selections from books donated to them by the CREDO/Sabre Book Program. With them are the principal, Ms. Tallery, some instructors, and CREDO's Program Officer, Ms. Winifred Deline.

Sabre did much to assure local schools of its goodwill and intention of sustaining its book assistance program in Liberia through comparatively large donations.

"Psychologically, it has helped build the students' self-confidence and ability in their individual and collective educational pursuits. Moreover, the exercise to some extent quieted the high level of post-traumatic stress disorder concealed in the pupils, teachers and even parents as a corollary of the war of 2003. Approximately 40-45 percent of benefitting pupils at all levels are girls.

"It is also an indication that the challenges of meeting Liberia's postwar book demands are not insurmountable, but that they can be converted from difficult circumstances into advantages through consistent and effective networking by diverse collaborators to facilitate book distribution, sponsor library development, encourage the local production of books, conduct reading enhancement programs, and establish book banks. The realization of these goals, however, depends on how effective CREDO is at [mobilizing resources to handle] increases in Sabre's donation to the Liberia book program over the next three years."



Students of James Doe AG School in Clara Town, Monrovia, display samples of books donated to the school by the CREDO/Sabre Book Program.

"It is the opinion of the education sector that meaningful interventions must be made by the international community and local sources, if quality education through quality book distribution is to be achieved in Liberia. Thus far, the desired impact of book distribution in Liberia has not been felt. The percentage of learners and staff with access to required, relevant books in sufficient quantity is almost zero.

"It is assumed that the Back-to-School and Disarmament, Demobilization, Rehabilitation and Reintegration (DDRR) programs will create an enabling environment and influence a return to the prewar high book status. [Failure to meet those expectations, though,] would be counter-productive, and could increase dropouts, deviants and delinquents in a society and school system struggling to return to normalcy.

"Admittedly, the Sabre/CREDO Book Distribution in Liberia has (1998-2004) significantly enhanced book accessibility and usage by target groups. The recent shipment of appropriate books and teaching aids by Sabre did much to assure local schools of its goodwill and intention of sustaining its book assistance program in Liberia through comparatively large donations.



Finance Officer Allen Kolison in CREDO's central warehouse (which was vandalized in the war of 2003) with boxes of books awaiting distribution.

Sabre owes a special debt of gratitude to John Archibald, retired Foreign Service Officer and a member of the Africa Advisory Committee, for his support of the Liberia program from its early days and the introduction to CREDO. The support of The Achelis Foundation has been instrumental to the continuation of the Liberia program.

 Sabre Foundation

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