



*DC/SLA members got together to pack a shipment of books for the Lubuto Library Project.*

## SLA Members Pitch In To Help Librarians Make a Difference in Africa

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Twenty-seven members and friends from the DC SLA Chapter took the opportunity on May 1, 2009 to spend a little of their free time to make a difference in the world. The volunteers were all a part of the “pack out” of the second full collection destined for a new library being built in the African country of Zambia by the Lubuto Library Project. The Lubuto Library Project is the realization of an idea conceived by DC/SLA Member Jane Kinney Meyers.

Lubuto libraries are special places where Africa's street kids and other marginalized children can read for themselves, look at books or have books read to them. The libraries are havens from a harsh life, where children can just be children, and where books can allow them to dream and envision a better future. The Lubuto Library project is distinguished from traditional book donation programs. The project is unique in providing complete library collections of excellent children's books, already organized. On delivery, an instant library with books covering a wide range of subjects and levels is created.

Of course, that “instant library” requires a whole team of volunteers that work diligently to review donated materials, organize and process materials for

the collection, and finally, prepare and ship the materials to Zambia. The second Lubuto Library collection has been growing for months. Ever since the first collection was shipped a year ago, volunteers have been meeting weekly to process over 4,000 books that have been either donated or purchased specifically for the street children of Zambia. The “pack out” was the last step and DC/SLA was able to contribute an army of helpers, ready to pack up the collection for its long journey by ship to Zambia, thanks to assistance from Lubuto's friends at the National Geographic Society.

The effort was coordinated by the co-chairs of the DC/SLA Community Relations Committee, Kenlee Ray and Richard Huffine. The Community Relations Committee works throughout the year to find volunteer opportunities where librarians and information professionals can give back in their community. The Committee has coordinated efforts to support public, school, and special libraries with cataloging, weeding, and shifting their collections. Last year the Committee began assisting the Lubuto Library Project.

In 2008, DC/SLA members participated in a book drive that donated over 250 books that were included in the collection for the second Lubuto Library, that we just packed for shipment. The second Lubuto Library is actually being built thanks to the generous support of Dow Jones. Dow Jones staff all over the country participated in their own book drive and the company donated the funding to construct the second Lubuto Library. Dow Jones staff was also present and ready to help pack the collection with other DC/SLA members. SLA's President-Elect Anne Caputo was on hand with other Dow Jones staff from the area and a whole crew of friends.

The pack out was initially planned to span two work days and crews of DC/SLA members were split across three shifts. The actual project required constructing over 70 boxes, filling each box fully so they wouldn't collapse when they were stacked and placed on pallets for the long sea voyage to Zambia. The packing included counting the number of books in each box and recording which collections were included in the box. The Lubuto Library Project has created a unique classification scheme that organizes and provides access to its collections (stories, people, places, etc.). *(continued...)*

Once packed, the boxes were sealed and set aside in order to number the entire shipment once the collection was completely packed. All of the boxes were then relocated to hallways in the church so they were out of the way for Sunday services and ready for the National Geographic Society to pick them up. The National Geographic Society is just one of many organizations that have stepped up to offer in-kind services to help the Lubuto Library Project. Starbucks provided refreshments to the DC/SLA volunteers that helped with the pack out. Students from the Edmund Burke School were on hand to do the heavy lifting involved in the pack out.

The effort of the DC/SLA crew of volunteers on Saturday morning was so successful that the afternoon crew only had a few things to clean up and finish. It was truly amazing to watch the entire collection packed up and ready to ship out in less than four hours. While packing up a library collection may not have required the advanced training of a team of librarians and information professionals, it was still satisfying work for everyone involved.

The connection between DC/SLA and the Lubuto Library Project is a natural fit and volunteers are now meeting weekly on Sunday afternoons to start building the third Lubuto Library Collection. The Lubuto Library Project is an effort where librarians can change the fate of children in Africa by giving them libraries. And libraries are something every information professional knows has the potential to change lives. If you'd like to volunteer, keep your eyes on the DC/SLA e-mail list for opportunities. If you want to get involved with the Lubuto Library Project, you can contact them at [webmail@lubuto.org](mailto:webmail@lubuto.org).



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