Sabre Outgrows Its Warehouse

In October 2001, Sabre moved out of its warehouse space at Dunn and Co. in Clinton, MA, at which books had been received, stored, processed and shipped for a decade. It had become apparent, as the Book Donation Program continued to grow, that a much larger facility had to be found. After an extensive search, a new warehouse space was identified in Lawrence, MA, approximately 40 minutes drive north of Boston. Once again Sabre will carry out its operations from a building which was formerly a textile mill. The major difference, however, is that the Foundation will now occupy 67,000 square feet of space – well over twice the amount that was available in Clinton (and about the size of one and a half football fields). Sabre’s warehouse staff and the truckers who deliver and pick up pallets of donated books will also be able to take advantage of improved access to freight elevators and loading docks.

The mammoth task of moving close to three quarters of a million books was begun at the end of September and was coordinated by Sabre’s Warehouse Supervisor, Bill Hantzis. The job was completed by early November and Sabre is now up and running at the new facility.

The warehouse relocation opens up exciting prospects for the Sabre Book Program. The extra capacity not only means an overall increased efficiency in warehouse operations but also offers the possibility for continued expansion. A grand opening event is scheduled to be held at the Lawrence warehouse in April, 2002. Please contact Sabre if you would like to receive an invitation.

View of the new Sabre Warehouse (top floor) in Lawrence, MA.

Bringing African Partners Together

In January 2002, Sabre will hold a Dialogue of African Partners Conference in Accra, hosted by Sabre’s Ghanaian partner organization, the Ghana Book Trust. The purpose of the five-day conference is to bring together book donation organizations and other interested parties to discuss the current status of book programs in Africa with a view to improving quality and meeting book needs more fully. Among those attending will be Sabre partners from Eritrea, Kenya, Liberia, Somalia, Tanzania, and Uganda, and a prospective partner organization from Sierra Leone. A number of the sessions will be open to other organizations and individuals involved in education and the NGO sector, as well as book publishing in Africa. In addition to Ghanaian participation at these sessions, representatives from organizations in Togo and Niger have also confirmed that they will be attending – perhaps an indicator of the interest in book donation programs in general and the Sabre program in particular.

The conference will also include two days of “hands-on” computer and Internet training workshops. Sabre is pleased to work in cooperation with BusyInternet in Accra in hosting the training sessions. BusyInternet (www.busyinternet.com) is a brand new facility with a mission “to establish state-of-the-art technology centers across Africa to promote social and economic development.”

As the decision to hold such a conference indicates, Sabre’s Michael W. Christian Program for Africa continues to flourish. Since the last update, Sabre has signed new partnership agreements with organizations in Eritrea and Uganda. By the end of the year, shipments to countries in Africa will have constituted 50% of Sabre’s total shipments for 2001.
“Training of Trainers” Follow Up

As noted in the July Update, Sabre Foundation provided training for twenty-eight teenagers from the countries of the former Soviet Union participating in the Future Leaders Exchange (FLEX) Program. Under a grant from the U.S. Department of State, Sabre’s trainers worked with the students on computer and Internet training techniques. To prepare the students for their roles as trainers, the Sabre training focused on techniques for working with all levels of learners, conducting assessments, and curriculum development. The trainers also encouraged the students to think about real situations that they might encounter in their communities. With new skills and a vision in mind, each student developed a “personal action plan” for putting his or her training skills to use.

Sabre has continued to monitor the experiences of the students since they returned home this summer. Vusal Khanlarov (Azerbaijan) has developed his own web site about Azerbaijan. He also volunteered with the latest group of departing FLEX students. Pavel Gorenitsyn (Belarus) is helping to create a local ACCELS alumni website. Irena Gregor (Moldova) is teaching English and computer skills to school children. Yana Bodrashova (Russian Federation) taught a new computer class that she developed at the summer camp that she has worked at for the last several years. Andrey Kiselyov (Tajikistan) built a web site and is conducting computer training for Dilsuz, the Association for Disabled People in Tajikistan. After building the web site, Andrey taught staff how to maintain and add new information to the site. Oksana Arkhypchuk (Ukraine) has organized computer training sessions in her school, and is working with a school administrator to apply for grants to fund a new computer center. Sabre’s trainers continue to encourage the students to share their skills and expertise with their schools and communities.

Ugandan Librarians Train at Sabre

Stella Nekusa and Eva Barongo, librarians from Kampala, Uganda, recently visited Boston to attend the annual IFLA conference. Following the conference, the librarians spent two weeks with the Sabre staff, where they received computer training and spent time at various libraries and organizations in the area.

In addition to receiving training on how to create their own web pages and the use of HTML language, Stella and Eva also became more familiar with group chat rooms, listservs, newsgroups, and online searching techniques.

Stella (an acquisitions librarian) and Eva (a children’s librarian) both work in public library settings and were particularly interested in improving access to information for disadvantaged children and people with disabilities. Site visits arranged by Sabre during their stay included tours of the Perkins School for the Blind and the Cambridge Public Library.

Uganda is also the site of Sabre’s newest book program in Africa. Sabre looks forward to working with its Ugandan partner, the Uganda Private and Integrated Schools Association (UPISA).
Book Donation Programs

Environmental Shelf. Earlier this year, Sabre completed its “Environmental Bookshelf” project, by shipping out sets of books covering a range of environmental issues to 75 environmental centers in Latin America, Asia and Africa. The project was funded by the Prosper Hill Foundation and involved two other collaborating organizations. The Wildlife Conservation Society was responsible for selecting the 20 titles which made up the “shelf” and for identifying the recipient organizations. The environmental publisher, Island Press, supplied the books through a combination of donation and reduced-cost purchase. Sabre also made an additional four sets available for distribution within Cuba, at the request of Fundacion Amistad.

The Bookshelves were mailed using the US Postal Service’s M-bag service and have begun to reach their destinations. In a recent email, Dr. Nicholas Georgiadis of the Mpala Research Centre in Kenya reported, “It’s hard for me to describe the significance of this gift to our library (one way might be to send you a photo of the empty shelves!). But that wouldn’t do justice to the quality and relevance of the selection.”

Continued Cooperation with Peace Corps. In addition to the containers to Benin, Jordan, Morocco and Zambia listed in the July update, Sabre book shipments in the second half of the year will support Peace Corps projects in Kenya, Armenia, Moldova and the Dominican Republic — bringing the total number of books shipped through the partnership with Peace Corps to over a quarter of a million.

University Partnerships Program. Sabre has begun working with several participants of the U.S. Department of State NIS College and University Partnerships Program (NISCUPP). NISCUPP is an academic institutional linkage program for the Newly Independent States and is designed to strengthen the capabilities of NIS institutions of higher learning to contribute to the transitions to democracy and market economies. Benefits of program participation include strengthened teaching, research, and public service capability for all partner institutions; opportunities to establish new academic programs or expand existing ones; successful collaborative research improvement and sharing among partner institutions; and outreach to local communities and relevant professional and government entities.

Sabre’s book donation program will support these initiatives by working with US host institutions to provide classroom texts and library materials to selected NIS colleges and universities. For example, close to 9,000 books are en route to the American University of Kyrgyzstan, which is partnered with Indiana University. Sabre also is working with Indiana University to provide university textbooks to the newly-established South East European University in Tetovo, Macedonia, in a project funded by USAID’s US-Macedonia Linkage Program.

On a smaller scale, Sabre is working with the School of Law at the University of Pittsburgh to provide American and European law books for Donetsk National University in Ukraine and planning is underway for a similar program for the University of Belgrade.

In a related development, the Caspian Studies Program at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, is working closely with Sabre to raise funds to initiate a book program in Azerbaijan for the Khazar University in Baku.

So far in 2001, Sabre Foundation has shipped close to $10 million worth of books overseas and provided Internet training to 63 international visitors, all on an operating budget of less than $700,000. For information on making a contribution to Sabre, please contact Ken Mackler, Comptroller, at (617) 868-3510 or sabre@sabre.org. All contributions are fully tax-deductible. Sabre also accepts contributions online at www.sabre.org.

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Visit to the Balkans - September 2001

In early September, I traveled to South-Eastern Europe to meet with Sabre-Zagreb and World University Service, Sabre’s partners in Croatia and Bosnia & Herzegovina. I also visited Montenegro for the first time, for meetings at the University of Montenegro and the Podgorica office of World University Service, a prospective partner in Montenegro.

News of the terrorist attacks of September 11 reached me aboard a ferryboat on the Adriatic. After spending several days in Sarajevo, I had just left Vukovar, in north-eastern Croatia, which was decimated by Serbian artillery some ten years ago. The four-year siege of Sarajevo and the destruction in Vukovar were on my mind as I tried to understand what was happening at home. Arriving in the medieval city of Dubrovnik, I was touched to see flags being flown at half-mast, a sight which was repeated throughout Croatia.

Tania Vitvitsky, Executive Director

Sabre’s Book Donation Philosophy

Sabre’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.

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