FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
December 31, 2007

Sabre Foundation Ships More Than 50,000 New Books and CD-ROMs to Iraqi Universities in New Program

Cambridge, MA – Since its first shipment to the University of Mosul in 2006, Sabre Foundation has shipped a total of 51,390 new books, with a fair market value of well over three million dollars, in a recently-established initiative to benefit Iraqi libraries and institutions of higher learning. The shipments have included basic core texts in the sciences, medicine, humanities and social sciences as well as more specialized materials, all selected by Iraqi universities.

Sabre Foundation’s work in Iraq began with a grant from the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), which tasked Sabre with purchasing collections of books for Iraqi universities in the subject areas of constitutional design, multi-ethnic/multi-religious countries, and truth and reconciliation processes. Sabre initially envisioned the USIP-funded project as part of a larger plan, developed in collaboration with the Harvard Committee on Iraqi Libraries to distribute educational materials in Iraq over a three-year period. As conditions on the ground in Iraq deteriorated, however, implementation of the USIP-funded project was significantly slowed and prospects for a larger program looked increasingly uncertain. An unforeseen opportunity arose in late 2005, when Sabre was learned through the Mosul office of the U.S. Embassy that the University of Mosul was interested in a shipment of new books on a range of subjects. Following resolution of the considerable logistical and security issues, a container of more than 12,000 new books, predominantly in the areas of science and medicine, was shipped via Turkey into Iraq in late 2006, with Sabre’s costs being covered by the university itself. The success of this shipment laid the ground for an expanded and ongoing Sabre program focusing on Kurdistan. Since spring 2007, Sabre has sent three more shipments to universities in northern Iraq, including institutions in Erbil, Dohuk and Zakho. Also in 2007, the USIP-funded shipment of library collection sets, destined for the Iraq National Library and Archive and 20 universities, was successfully delivered to Baghdad for distribution throughout Iraq.

Sabre has plans under way to expand its support of Iraqi libraries and universities, who face daunting challenges. The situation confronting these institutions is comprehensively outlined in *Iraqi Libraries and Archives in Peril: Survival in a Time of Invasion, Chaos, and Civil Conflict, A Report*, researched and written by Jeff Spurr, Islamic and Middle East Specialist, Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard University. This report is available online at the website of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/update_2007.htm).

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