



TOP TIPS FOR BOOK DONATIONS

A donation of books to a library overseas can be a wonderful gift and a great way to meet colleagues. You'll never look at your own library in quite the same way again after experiencing LIS through the eyes of others. But it's not just about getting rid of stuff you don't want. ALIA's Asia Pacific Special Interest Group (APSIG) have some hints to get you started.

1. Give books and library materials that will be used

Book donations to overseas libraries are not a way to get rid of old unwanted books. Books that are outdated, worn or superseded are not suitable for donation to libraries in developing countries. Try to match your donation to the language, language ability and information needs of the library users. Your donations need to appeal to local readers and get them in to the library, otherwise there is no point in donating them.

2. Ask the library what they need

If you really want to help, the best thing you can do is ask the library what they need. This shows a real interest in their future, and allows you to build up a partnership with the library you're supporting. A two-way relationship will make for a more successful outcome on both sides.

3. Be aware of the logistics

The major obstacle to a successful book donation is getting the books there. Australia has no organisation that distributes books to other countries. The Department of Foreign Affairs & Trade, AusAID, ALIA and the National Library are all unable to help with this so the cost and logistics of sending books to other libraries are the donor's responsibility.

It's also essential to have a contact in the destination

country prepared to clear the books through local customs, pay the necessary fees and charges in local currency and have them shipped from the international port to the destination town, village, island etc. This is required in all countries (including Australia).

4. Network with others

Networking with others who may be able to help you achieve your objectives is really valuable. Australian or international groups who know the language, the political situation and who have a good track record in that country can be especially useful contacts. For example, some non-government organizations (NGOs) and charities have networks in place to ship materials to overseas countries and it is worth talking to any who are active in your country of choice.

5. Remember the cataloguers

If you've succeeded in sending books to another library, spare a thought for how the local library staff are going to process and catalogue a large shipment of books. Do they have enough shelving, labels and stationery? If they have an automated system, can you supply MARC records for the books, or a spreadsheet listing them?

6. Keep up the contact

Don't just send and forget. Follow up with more donations or better still, a visit to meet them and talk to them in person. There might be something else they need – advice, training, your old computers, shelving, conservation supplies, even a volunteer. Get to know your colleagues, wherever they are.

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