

Kabul Library bolstered by 1,700 new textbooks

BY FRANK NOLAN
For the Bulletin

More than 90 boxes of textbooks collected by University of Manitoba medical students are on their way to the Kabul Medical Institute Library in Afghanistan. The shipment is more than double the core medical library of 750 books that was the project's original goal.

About 1,700 recent medical textbooks (1994 or later) were collected by student volunteers across Canada to help rebuild the Kabul Medical Institute Library, which has few books after decades of war. Additional cash donations and a sale of old textbooks raised \$8,000, which was used to buy new textbooks at discount prices. The total retail value of the books, if bought new, would be about \$250,000.

Cheragh Ali, dean of the Kabul Medical Institute, said by phone that he is "overwhelmed" by the efforts of the volunteers, and by the goodwill the project has created.

The books, including key texts from each of the major medical subfields, are desperately needed by medical students and faculty in Afghanistan, including a large contingent of women who are now able to continue their education after Taliban restrictions.

"Medical school is tough at the best of times, most of all in a war torn country with few resources," said medical student Kevin Warrian, one of the project's co-directors. "We can only struggle to imagine what it's like to learn these subjects without even the core textbooks."

The Kabul Medical Library project was initiated by University of Manitoba radiology professor Richard Gordon in January 2002. It was taken on as a class project by the Manitoba Medical Students Association in fall 2003 under the direction of medical students Kevin Warrian, Magda Kujath and Jason Tapper. The project was later adopted by the Canadian Federation of Medical Students, which includes 13 medical schools in Canada.

Numerous medical, graduate and undergraduate students from across the University of Manitoba campus helped with the moving, cataloging, labeling and sorting of the books. They were assisted by U of M librarians, private citizens and members of the Winnipeg Afghan community, including U of M student Mariam Omar. All told there were hundreds of volunteers in Winnipeg and elsewhere.

The donated textbooks were collected from across Canada and

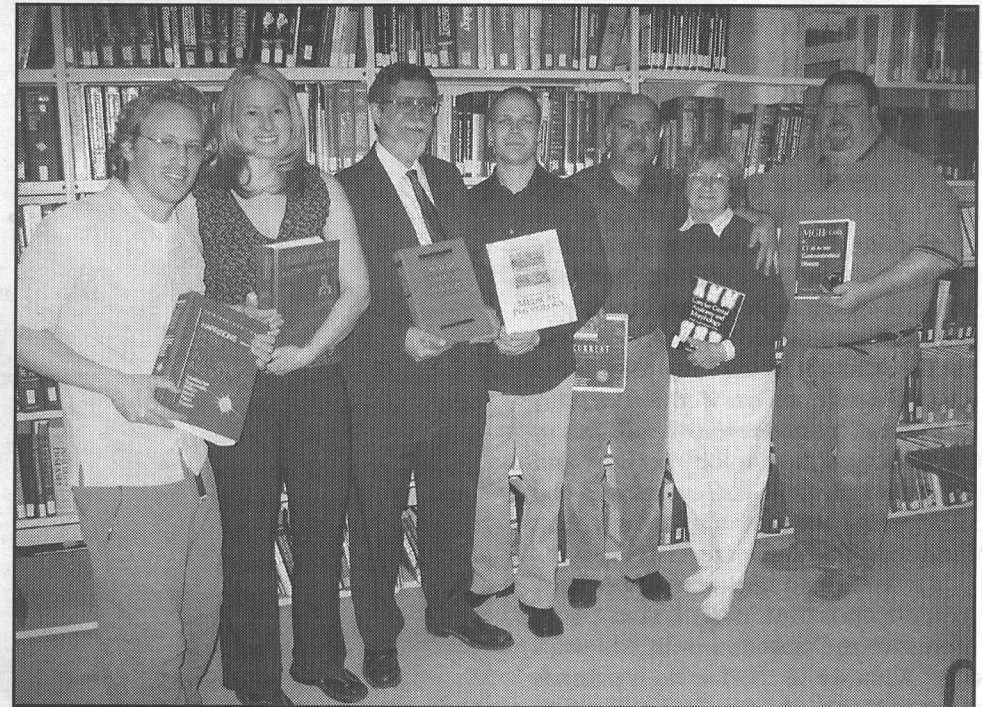


Photo by Frank Nolan

Kabul Library Project volunteers, from left, Jason Tapper, Magdalena Kujath, Richard Gordon, Kevin Warrian, Niazi Abdul Wasi, Diana Gordon, Paul Meunier, Director of Warehousing at Login Brothers Canada stand in front of the collected books at the Login Brothers warehouse.

sorted in the warehouse of Login Brothers Canada, a medical textbook distributor with headquarters in Winnipeg that also donated 430 books.

On May 28, Login Brothers packed and shipped the books to the Canadian Forces Base in Trenton, Ontario, to await transportation to Afghanistan.