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## Geographer hosts book drive for Ugandan village libraries

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GAINESVILLE, Fla. — The abundance and variety of books available to the average American student is unfathomable to children in Uganda, who leave school as early as fourth grade to work in the fields.

[University of Florida \[http://www.ufl.edu\]](http://www.ufl.edu) graduate student Joel Hartter, a doctoral candidate in geography, recently established four community libraries in the East African country and is hosting a local book drive beginning Thursday to restock their shelves. Hartter is a coordinator for the Foundation for Children and Education in Uganda.

The foundation seeks contributions of new and semi-used books and magazines. This includes textbooks of any kind, particularly health books, as well as fiction and non-fiction for children, teens and adults. Some magazines, including National Geographic, are also being collected. The foundation is accepting cash donations to cover shipping costs.

Book donations can be dropped off at the UF geography department in Turlington Hall, Room 3141, or Wild Iris Books, 802 W. University Ave. Monetary contributions should be submitted to Peter Waylen, Department of Geography, 3141 Turlington Hall, P.O. Box 117315, Gainesville, FL 32611. Checks should be made payable to Joel Hartter, with "Uganda Libraries" listed in the memo section.

While visiting Uganda to conduct preliminary dissertation work in the summer of 2005, Hartter saw the disparity between the U.S. and the area. He decided to give back to the impoverished region where he had researched. He and fellow researchers from the University of California, Davis, have opened libraries in the villages of Kanyawara, Ruteete, Kigarama and Nkingo — and are planning a fifth library outside Fort Portal.

But the purpose of the libraries goes beyond lending books, dictionaries, newspapers and magazines to the village people. The foundation has also established language classes, created a nursery school and provided small scholarships to teens. It also offers various trade programs aimed at teaching women marketable skills. A major goal of the foundation is to provide economic opportunities for women.

"We see our mission as being so much more than simply providing educational materials to these impoverished people," said Hartter. "We want to open the door to a better life for them through these libraries that serve as centers of learning."

For more information about the book project, visit <http://www.booksopentheworld.org/> [\[http://www.booksopentheworld.org/\]](http://www.booksopentheworld.org/).

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## Credits

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