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FAU sends English language books to Iraq, Armenia

By Dale M. King

CITY EDITOR

Florida Atlantic University Libraries have redirected thousands of English language books that are not needed by its library users to Armenia and Iraq. University officials said this will enable librarians in those nations to augment collections and offer a larger variety of titles to readers.

The library's effort, which now includes a network of southeast Florida libraries as partners and an Iraqi university as a recipient, began after Dr. William Miller, dean of University Libraries at FAU, returned from Armenia following the September 2001 terrorist attacks.

The visit was Miller's first of three on behalf of the U.S. Department of State Speaker/Consultant Program to do outreach with Armenian librarians.

"Before 1991, books to Soviet Bloc countries were provided free of charge centrally from Moscow, and of course, they were all in Russian," said Miller. "After the fall of the Soviet Union, the book shipments stopped, and the countries had no money to purchase books. By 2001, the libraries had basically acquired no books for a decade and also had little or nothing in English."

Miller and his staff at the S.E. Wimberly Library on FAU's Boca Raton campus began the project by setting aside appropriate books among duplicates from the gifts program. The first books shipped were mainly science and technology texts

donated by an area publisher of scientific research manuals. Miller occasionally tossed in books from his personal collection. "The emphasis was always on current, quality material, either in science or in history, literature and other areas of great interest," he said.

After the project got underway, Miller and Tom Sloan, executive director of the Southeast Florida Library Information Network (SEFLIN), who has also visited Armenia many times as a consultant for the State Department, collaborated on how to provide ongoing assistance to Armenian libraries.

SEFLIN, which includes FAU Libraries among its membership of more than 300 libraries, assumed the project, named it the SEFLIN Gifts Book Program and began shipping books to Armenia in January 2006. The project's name has since been changed to the SEFLIN Gift Library Materials Program.

About 3,500 of the books shipped by SEFLIN have been academic titles, while about 3,200 have been books designated for grade schools and public libraries. More than 100 titles on the study of the English language have been do-



(Special to the News)

Dr. William Miller, dean of University Libraries, and Tom Sloan, director of Southeast Florida Information Network, review books at the S.E. Wimberly Library.

nated to language institutes.

FAU Libraries have given at least 55 percent of the books for the effort over the past two years. In addition, Lynn University, Palm Beach Community College, Lighthouse Point Library and members of the S.E. Florida Independent School Libraries Consortium have donated books, microfilm, videotapes and other library materials.

Amed Demirhan, library director of the University of Kurdistan Hawler Library, an English language university in Erbil, Iraq, said he has noticed a change in his students since his library began receiving the books. "The connectivity gives our students the feeling that they are part of the global community and not isolated anymore," said Demirhan, a former Broward County Library employee, who requested the books before returning home to Iraq.