

# Knowledge goes a long way

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Copies of "Wuthering Heights" and "Othello" recently began a lengthy journey, along with "Essentials of Internal Medicine" and "Principles of Economics."

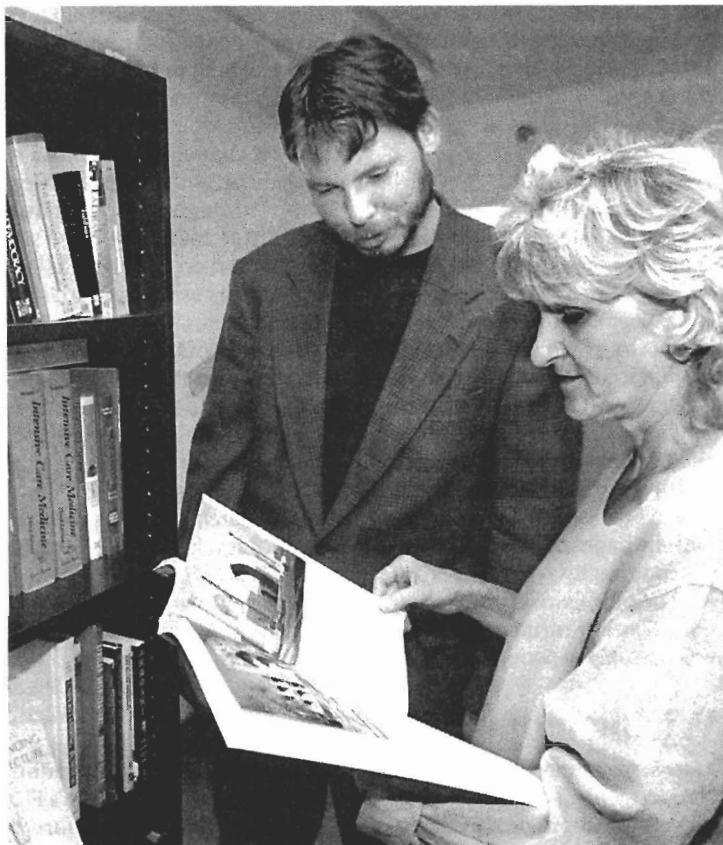
They are among 9,000 books from Boston and Cambridge bound for Afghanistan, via Belgium, Uzbekistan, and bumpy rides across the Afghan border.

"People ask, 'What could be easier than sending a bunch of books?'" says Tania Vitvitsky, executive director of the Cambridge-based Sabre Foundation, established in 1969 to send educational materials to developing nations. "It's not as simple as some people might think it is."

Sabre shipped the books in advance of Afghanistan's winter, when snow can make travel almost impossible. The foundation's new Afghan Book Donation Program involves collaborating with partners and aid groups to assure that the materials get where they need to go.

One such intermediary is Afghan native Najim Azadzoi, a Newton-based architect who provides reconstruction advice in Afghanistan. Azadzoi arrived in Kabul last Sunday to deliver to Kabul University a smaller Sabre donation of 39 books on Islamic and Western architecture, engineering, and construction.

"[Sabre has] one of the most efficient means of distributing English-language books that I know of," says Andrew Hess, director of the Southwest Asia Program at Tufts' Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. "Sabre studies the situation in these developing countries and supplies books accord-



GLOBE STAFF PHOTO/PAT GREENHOUSE

## Alexander Gupman and Tania Vitvitsky of the Sabre Foundation examine a book on Islamic architecture.

ing to their needs."

Test preparation materials are among the books called for by beneficiaries in Afghanistan. "SAT and GRE prep books have been requested," says Vitvitsky, adding that the requests reflect Afghan students' desire to attend US schools.

Sabre, which hopes to secure funding from the US State Department to continue the program, develops book lists used by Afghan recipients to request specific texts. The foundation then solicits major

publishers to donate the books.

"All the books are new," says Vitvitsky. "They're not textbooks that are all marked up."

"Or Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys," adds Sabre program officer Alexander Gupman. Gupman explains that when book drives occur without needs assessment, the materials often sit in warehouses or get used to kindle fire.

"The issue is not to just send a bunch of books," says Vitvitsky. "It's to send books that people will need and use."

Boston Sunday Globe, Sept. 22, 2002