A Sister Library Success Story: Appalachian State University and la Biblioteca Th’uruchapitas

Elizabeth Cramer, John Boyd, Belk Library & Information Commons, Appalachian State University

Service Learning

In the past year, la Biblioteca Th’uruchapitas has hosted several groups of ASU students traveling to Bolivia. These students were in Bolivia for several reasons: conducting research, working on international service-learning projects, or taking a study-abroad class for credit.

Service Learning Courses – In the last two years, two three-credit courses have traveled to Cochabamba. Library professor Rob Sanders taught a three-hour credit course titled “Connecting the Appalachians to the Andes.” As part of the class, Appalachian graduate students raised over $4,000 in funds and collected over 1,600 Spanish-language or bilingual books to donate to la Biblioteca.

Service Projects in K-12 – Many of the graduate students are teachers or media center coordinators and they, in turn, involved their K-12 students in fund-raising projects.

Global Connections

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“International Spring Break – For two years in a row, students have visited la Biblioteca to deliver donated picture books. In 2010, Jim Street and Jenny Koehn took 14 students to Cochabamba to deliver picture books and work with their partner organization, CAICC, a center that works with children whose mothers are in a nearby prison.”

“Faculty Research – In March, 2010, Elizabeth Cramer and John Boyd visited la Biblioteca in conjunction with their research on international library development. For three days the “Dangerous Women” served as tireless and gracious hostesses.”

“My experience in Bolivia changed my life. Seeing the poverty in such a culturally rich country touched my heart. To think there are children in countries with little or no opportunity to pick up a book for the pure enjoyment of reading was unfathomable to me.”

Tracy Chapman, MLS student, 2005.

“What I have gained has been a passion to see learning and reading extend to students on a global scale. What a life changing event traveling to Bolivia was last spring with Dr. Rob.”

Sarah Rhyne, MLS student, 2010.

“What a wonderful endeavor for Appalachian to embark on and get students involved with. For students like me, in library science, the Sister Library project provides many opportunities to help others understand this rich culture, and to then get them involved in helping.”


Bolivia Kits – The Friends of the Libraries (Appalachian State University) donated funds to create Bolivia Culture Kits that can be checked out by faculty, students, K-12 schools, and community borrowers. The kits include Bolivian books, musical instruments, clothing, and various other items. All items were purchased by our “Dangerous Women” in Cochabamba and sent to Boone, N.C.

Visiting Scholars – Gaby Vallejo and several of the “Dangerous Women” have visited Appalachian State University’s campus and the surrounding community of Boone, North Carolina, most recently in 2007. They spoke with students, faculty, and community groups about the economic, educational, and social realities of Bolivia.

K-12 / Community

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Tina Stephens, Library Science graduate, raises money for the Sister Library Project.