



U.S. EMBASSY - BAGHDAD

2008 Provincial Reconstruction Team News

-PRT Initiative Connects Iraqi Students with World-

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Al Kut, Iraq - An initiative that would expand the horizons of Iraqis beyond their village, district, province, and even the country itself is underway in Wasit province.

The Wasit Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), in concert with the Wasit Director General of Education, started a yearlong initiative it calls Access to Information in March.



Schools to get books, Internet Access to information

The program provides books and information resources to local primary and secondary schools as well as universities and public libraries. In addition, internet centers are being set up at selected secondary schools and universities as well as the municipal library headquarters in al Hayy and al Kut, said Vanessa Beary, the PRT public diplomacy officer.

Beary said the idea behind the PRT program was “to have an impact on the entire community. One computer is an opportunity to access information, just like one book is an opportunity.”

The initiative started with the opening of an internet center at the al Kut Girls Secondary School in March and has continued with the opening of internet centers at Open University and the 14 July Boys School. All of the internet centers feature 10 computer stations, internet service, furniture, an air conditioning unit and a generator.

The Center at the 14 July Boys High School in al Kut, which was established in 1996, will service 1,000 students and is “an opportunity for the students to communicate with students in Iraq and neighboring countries,” said Beary.

“It’s good to have at school for me,” said 16-year-old Caef Raad, a student at the 14 July Boys High School. “I can chat with other people, and study on the internet.”

Beary added that two future internet projects are aimed for schools at Badrah and Jassan in the coming months.

The Open University internet center will serve approximately 1,000 professors. The Center will also be used by instructors selected to attend a 14-week online “train the trainer” course taught by the University of Oregon for instructors who teach English.

In addition to the internet center, Open University received books to supplement the university's student library. Included were Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) books used to prepare for the TOEFL test which is administered by schools of higher education to measure the proficiency of the English language by non-English speaking students.

Beary noted that in addition to the internet centers and book distribution, the PRT initiative includes refurbishments at district libraries, providing furniture, and the future establishment of TOEFL centers.