

Turn Trash into Treasure Recycling Children's Books: How disposed picture books benefit rural schools

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Children's books disposed from the libraries can be trash, but in great varieties, once they are recycled properly, they will be treasure. There are thousands of children's books disposed from the public libraries in the US due to different kind of reasons, through these years with careful handling, they become useful collections for the children of countries, where English is a major foreign language. They also have become valuable learning materials in schools and in the public libraries in Taiwan. In 1999, an earthquake stroke Taiwan and caused severe damages in the Central part of Taiwan. Many schools suffered from the damages. This tragedy brought in much concerns and donations from all over the world. North America Taiwan Women Association (NATWA) visited the damaged area and found that school libraries were in extreme need of help. In addition to monetary donation, NATWA realized the spiritual healing is as important as reconstruction process, therefore in 2004 NATWA launched "Turn Trash into Treasure Recycling Children's Books" program mainly collecting off-shelf children's books from American public libraries and shipped books to Taiwan, where the books are mostly in need. Geographically the recycling children's books are mostly collected from about 45 public libraries in the Northern New Jersey area. This paper presents how the project was initiated and promoted, so as programs were designed to make maximum utilization of the recycled children's books. Summarize statistical status of the project as well as cooperative process during the past four years.

Preface

September 21, 1999, an earthquake, that measured 7.3 on the Richter scale, struck Taiwan. This was Taiwan's worst earthquake in one hundred years. Puli were the epicenter of the quake; most of the schools in Puli were damaged. Students had to study in a temporary shelter. Volunteers from every parts of the world offered their help in many ways.

A delegation of NATWA visited Puli after the quake. In addition to the financial donation, NATWA found most of the libraries were collapsed and books collection was under the dirt rubble. NATWA strongly believes during the long reconstruction and healing process, the victims need not only financial help but also mental healing help. If the libraries could provide material for them to read, a comfortable place for them to share their feelings, some courses to train skills, they would be recovered soon.

At the same time, due to the impact of the educational reformation, the education system in Taiwan has had a lot of changes. Besides, globalization has greatly affected education, economy and politics in Taiwan. To increase Taiwan's competitiveness, learning foreign languages, especially English, is important and essential. In order to provide English-learning environments, schools and public librarians in Taiwan need to collect English books. For the elementary school students, the English picture books can provide the best and easy access to English language. The pictures in the books can appeal to children. By reading the simple English, they can develop their interest in English. Because of the limited budget, many schools are unable to collect many English picture books. Those donated books from NATWA will enrich their English collection in the libraries. So, after lots of books were donated to the Affiliated Senior High School of Chi Nan University, and more than 35 public libraries and culture centers have been benefited from this book program, in Feb.2006, NATWA book project implemented another program called, "Mixed vegetable Noodle Soup" program. Currently there are two "Mixed Vegetable Noodle Soup" program distribution centers being established. One is in Nantou County and the other one is Kaohsiung County.

Strategies

1. Who are they to make it happen?

NATWA is a non profit organization registered in USA. A group of volunteers, who love Taiwan, carry the same recycling concept; want to help children in Taiwan; help Taiwanese children to have wider vision, just like a tall tree to have longer and stronger roots to further face any kind of challenges.

2. How to collect books?

There are thousands of books disposed from public libraries or school libraries in USA annually. Most of the books are put into dumpsters. In order to collect those children's books, with volunteers' limited resources, we design a program with plans, marketing tools, and strategies to systematically implement them. We further believe in "give and take" win-win, two way approach strategies. We not only build up good relationship with the librarians, but also we offer our "Book Project Extended Programs." To pay back to those libraries who have supported and donated to our program on long term basis. Volunteers help out in the American libraries' "book sale" events. In 2006, we hosted 3 cultural programs, which included Reading Taiwanese Stories in Morris County Library (Feb. 2006), constructing a window display at Madison Library (Sept. 2006), hosting Taiwan Day at Madison Library (Oct. 2006). In 2007, sponsoring, "Celebrate Taiwan", which included a most popular Taiwanese puppet show - "Sun Moon Lake" at Morris County Library (March 3.2007).

3. Shipments

“Turn Trash into Treasure, Recycling Children's Books” project sponsored by North American Taiwanese Women's Association (NATWA) has two kinds of shipments to meet the different needs.

(1) Large Shipments give large donations towards one single organization or culture center in Taiwan. There are about one to two thousand (1,000 – 2,000) pieces books on each shipment. Organizations received books are such as: National Educational Information Center, Taichung Culture Center, or some high school libraries

(2) "Mixed Vegetable Noodle Soup" shipments

"Mixed Vegetable Noodle Soup", which literally means a bowl of mixed vegetable noodle soup. It is not a fancy food, but it will provide filling to your stomach. In the “Mixed Vegetable Noodle Soup” program, one elementary school gets one box of mixed English children’s books. Each box has a quantity of about 30-60 pieces of children’s English books mixing with different kind of subjects, sizes, stories, fiction and non-fiction. The goal of these shipments is to open the world to the children who have never touched real English books. This “Mixed vegetable Noodle Soup” program is targeted mainly to those Aborigine and Hakka elementary schools in the rural remote area, who do not have a penny of budget buying English books but are in desperate need of English books for teachers and children.

(3) Book Packaging

All the members of the project are volunteers. The volunteers' goal is to recycle Children’s English books, to create a global village, to pay back what Taiwan has given to them. When there were discarded books, volunteers drove to the libraries to collect them. In order to save the limited resources, they collected used cartons from supermarkets to package books. Their own garage became the staging post to sort, clean, filter and pack the books. Because these books have to go through custom clearance for two nations – USA and Taiwan, it has a strict packing rule all the volunteers have to follow. Volunteers gathered once a month roughly to do the book packing. The local transportation to take the packed books from garage to the seaport is donated by Acme Furniture Company. The handling charges from USA to Taiwan and Taiwan local transportation are paid for by volunteers’ donations or by local libraries themselves.

4 · Book Distribution

Currently three major distribution centers have been established and in good operation in Taiwan. In Taipei, most of the books went to the Ministry of Education, which particularly collected the American text books for primary and secondary education. NATWA Book team has shipped at least four (4) different text books in the past. . In central Taiwan, the Affiliated

Senior High School Library plays as the key role to distribute books to the elementary schools in the remote mountainous areas. In Southern Kaohsiung of Taiwan, Mrs.Lai is responsible to send books to the schools and tribe community libraries in Southern Taiwan such as Kaoshung, Pington, Taitong area.

5 · Feedback

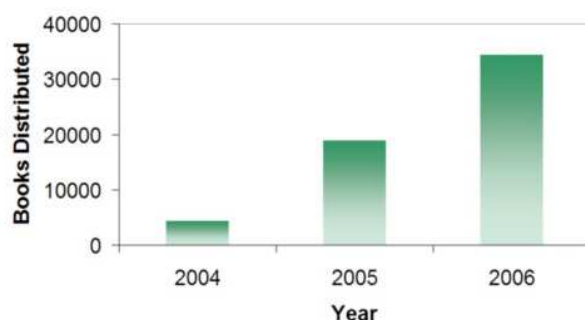
This book project tries to achieve the goal of knowing where the books have been distributed to. In order to know how their donated books are used in Taiwan, NATWA encourages their members to visit the libraries in Taiwan who received donated books. In the past three years, they have visited two-thirds of those school libraries. Amy Lai Lin, the Team Lead of the donation team, has made speeches on how to use the picture books at many libraries, including Taichung Cultural Center. She has been to the elementary schools, reading English books to the children. By the on-site visiting, she is able to evaluate what NATWA has done. Also, she collected information to report it on NATWA annual conference. It helps recruiting new volunteers and gets the support from all the members of NATWA.

6 FACTS

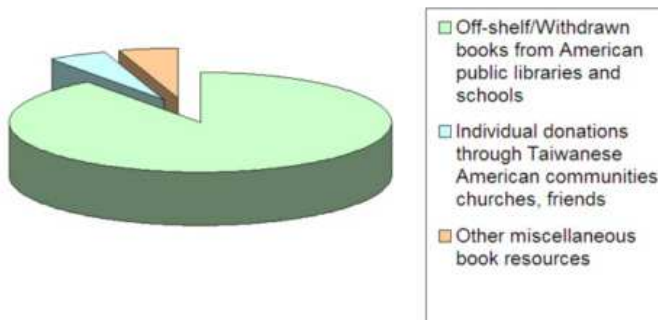
As of the end of 2006,

- Forty Five (45) big shipments have been made. .
- Total sixty thousands (60,000) books have been distributed.
- Affecting about 100 local elementary schools.
- Impacting about 40 public libraries in Taiwan.
- There are 45 American libraries, who have support and donated books to this program on long term basis.
- Two (2) major book distribution centers in Taiwan have been established and in good operation
- Three (3) Staging Centers have been established and in good operation in Northern New Jersey/New York/USA.
- Sponsoring extended programs to three (3) American libraries.
- Sponsoring extended program to several libraries in Taiwan

Total Books Distributed



Book Resources



7 Conclusions: This program is

- Turn Trash into Treasure!
- A very high investment return program
- Make it possible for the children in the other side of the Pacific being able to get access to the English picture books
- Motivate the children to learn English in early stage.
- From the viewpoint of environment protection, a worth doing one.
- Those books enrich the collection of school libraries, especially those rural school libraries.
- It helps a lot for those who have the insufficient budget to buy expensive English books.

8 Suggestions

- (1) Shipping charge for USA and Taiwan: It is suggested to have a yearly funding amount secured for the shipping charge in the U.S.A and Taiwan, either provided by the government organization or by private funding channel. At present, the fee is donated or fundraised by the volunteers or NATWA members.
- (2) Possible Package program: It is good to have a two way, mutual beneficiary extended package program, such as:

No	Idea Description	positive	weakness
1	Invite American librarians to visit Taiwan	Better understanding of Taiwan and the need for English books	needs more budget, man power, time and coordination to make it happen
2	Establish sister libraries between	Better understanding of	needs more budget, man power, time and

	the libraries in both countries	Taiwan and the need for English books	coordination to make it happen
3	Exchange newly published books between the libraries in both countries	Very workable within small scale pilot program	Needs less manpower, budget and time to achieve this goal

9. Others:

- (1) It is only given to the public or non-profit organizations.
- (2) The receiver for the big shipment is required to do the followings upon receipt of the books:
 - Put books on shelf as soon as possible.
 - write appreciation letters to American libraries, those who donates shipping fees, and NATWA
 - Take a group pictures together with the books.
 - Put NATWA stickers on

Author Notes

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