



*In Southeast Asian countries scarred by decades of war, oppression and poverty, an American international library project is building a new vision of hope – one library at a time.*







## *The Library of Vietnam Project*


In 1999 – exactly 30 years after serving there as a 19-year-old U.S. Army Infantryman – Francis J. “Chuck” Theusch returned to Duc Pho in Vietnam’s Quang Ngai Province.



*Meeting the people in a Vietnam at peace was truly awe-inspiring. Other returnees had told me that I would find the people to be friendly and charming. Indeed they were. My guide and interpreter, Tran Dinh Song, explained the strange phenomenon. In spite of the horrors of war, the national memory does include the American acts of generosity to orphanages, the poor and so on. A new day has dawned, bringing peace and reconciliation between the Vietnamese and American peoples.*

*– Chuck Theusch*





Thirty years after America ended its involvement in the Vietnam War – and after fighting two subsequent wars with its neighbors – Vietnam is one of Asia's fastest-growing economies. Second only to China, its neighbor to the north, Vietnam is a bustling, friendly nation with a population of more than 83 million in an area slightly larger than New Mexico.





since 2001, the Vietnamese government has increased its commitment to more international involvement and the development of a market-based economy. Despite growth in cities like Hanoi, however, it still faces challenges in rural areas.





heusch was so impressed with the friendliness of the Vietnamese people – and the experience of meeting former enemies like Mr. Dai, president of the Pho Thuan People's Committee in Duc Pho – that he abandoned his itinerary to stay in Vietnam and try to find a way to help.

*Former enemies, they naturally talked of the war. But the discussion turned from the past to the future soon enough. Mr. Dai and Mr. Theusch agreed that 'We can't change the past but we can change the future.' They have set about to do so. Tran Dinh Song noted the need for libraries and books throughout the country and especially in the Duc Pho area.*

*The idea was born. One-time adversaries have set about to build a different kind of memorial of the war – a living, breathing monument to peace, reconciliation and cooperation between our peoples.*

The Hon. Le Van Bang, former Vietnamese Ambassador to the United States





When Theusch visited the memorial to the My Lai massacre in Son My, Vietnam he met Tran Thi Anh Thu, who worked at the site. As a young infantryman in 1969, Theusch had served with the Americal Division and was stationed in the Son My area. Despite Thu's initial mistrust of Americans and particularly those who had served in the area of the massacre, she and Theusch began an e-mail correspondence that resulted in a warm friendship. Their e-mails have been reprinted in "Behind the Lines," a collection of American and foreign war letters by author Andrew Carroll.



*Although U.S. troops were responsible for the deaths of Thu's family and neighbors, she learned after the war that American soldiers had also flown her aunt by helicopter to a hospital in Chu Lai for emergency surgery that saved her life. Thu now works as a guide in the Vietnamese National Military History Museum in Hanoi, where Theusch visited her during a recent trip.*





he refund on Theusch's airline tickets to China and Russia provided the initial funding for the Library of Vietnam Project.

In 2001, the first project, the Francis J. "Chuck" Theusch Library, opened its doors in Duc Pho, Quang Ngai Province. The area is among the poorest in Vietnam and endured some of the worst action of the war, including the My Lai Massacre just a few kilometers to the north of the library site.

Today it is one of 19 Library of Vietnam Project sites. Theusch brings delegations of volunteers and donors back to Vietnam several times each year.





# Library of Vietnam Projects

1. Francis J. "Chuck" Theusch Library, Duc Pho, Quang Ngai Province
2. Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Quang Tri Town Library, Quang Tri Province
3. Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Dak Rong/Khe Sahn Library, Quang Tri Province
4. Francis J. "Chuck" Theusch Library, Vinh Linh District, Quang Tri Province
5. Dr. James R. Langworthy Library, Trieu Phong District, Quang Tri Province
6. George N. Wright Memorial Library, Gio Linh District, Quang Tri Province
7. Le Thi Hoa Dombroe-Bill Dietzel Memorial Library, Ho Chi Minh City
8. Kent Converse-Kinsley Rotary Unification Library, Kien Giang Province
9. Cam Lo District Library, Quang Tri Province
10. Francis J. "Chuck" Theusch Le Loi High School Library, Dong Ha Town, Quang Tri Province
11. Francis J. "Chuck" Theusch Thuong Hien School Library, Kien Xuong, Thai Binh Province
12. Worley/Engelken/Nguyen Library, Vo Thi Sau School, Nui Thanh, Quang Nam Province
13. Oconomowoc High School/Vinh Linh High School Library, Vinh Linh, Quang Tri Province
14. Kenneth R. Burton Quang Tri Town High School Library, Quang Tri Province
15. Roland G. Fontaine Memorial Library, Vinh Long City, Vinh Long Province
16. Hue Medical College, Hue
17. Village of Hope Orphanage, Da Nang
18. Bac Giang Blind School
19. Quang Tri Orphanage







W e always come back,” Theusch repeats in each location he visits. During a visit to a school for blind children in Bac Giang near Hanoi, he noted supplies to bring on a future visit.



Foss Worley, left, of Kansas City, and Kent Converse, of Garfield, Kan., look over one of the quilts donated by a group of Georgia quilters to the Bac Giang school. The library team also delivered new wheelchairs to a disabled veterans' home there.





Steven House, right, a regional director of the Vietnam Veterans of America and a member of the Library Project Board of Directors, helps assemble wheelchairs donated to a facility for disabled veterans at Bac Giang. The Library Project purchased the wheelchairs from a Vietnamese manufacturer.



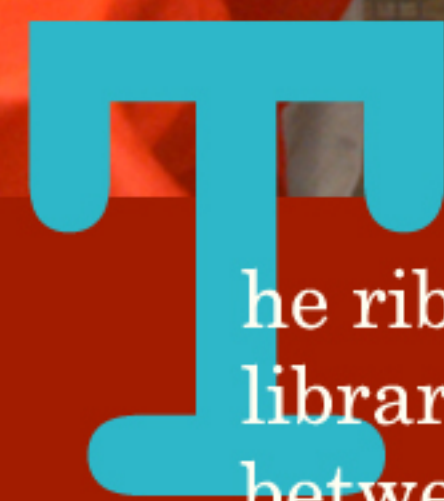


A close-up photograph of a young girl with dark hair, smiling warmly while holding a brown teddy bear. She is wearing a blue collared shirt. In the background, other teddy bears are visible, suggesting a collection or a gift distribution event. The lighting is soft, and the overall mood is joyful and tender.

*Among gifts distributed to children at the Bac Giang Blind School were kissing bears donated by Hallmark Cards, Inc. For many children at the school, the singing bears may be their only toy.*

*In 2005, Theusch and Bac Giang children were featured in National Geographic magazine photographs by Maggie Steber.*





he ribbon-cutting ceremony that marks the opening of a new library is often an emotional one, cementing close relationships between project volunteers, funders and local officials.



*As the Library Project delegation arrives in Cam Lo, Quang Tri Province, for the dedication of a newly completed library, students in the neighboring school offer an enthusiastic welcome.*

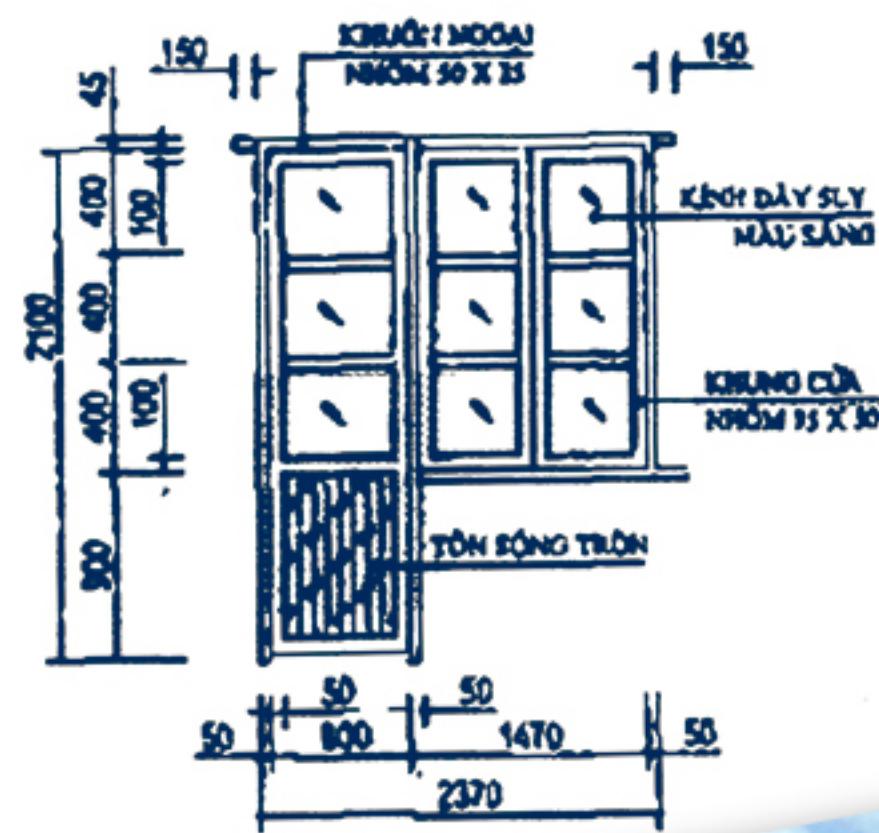




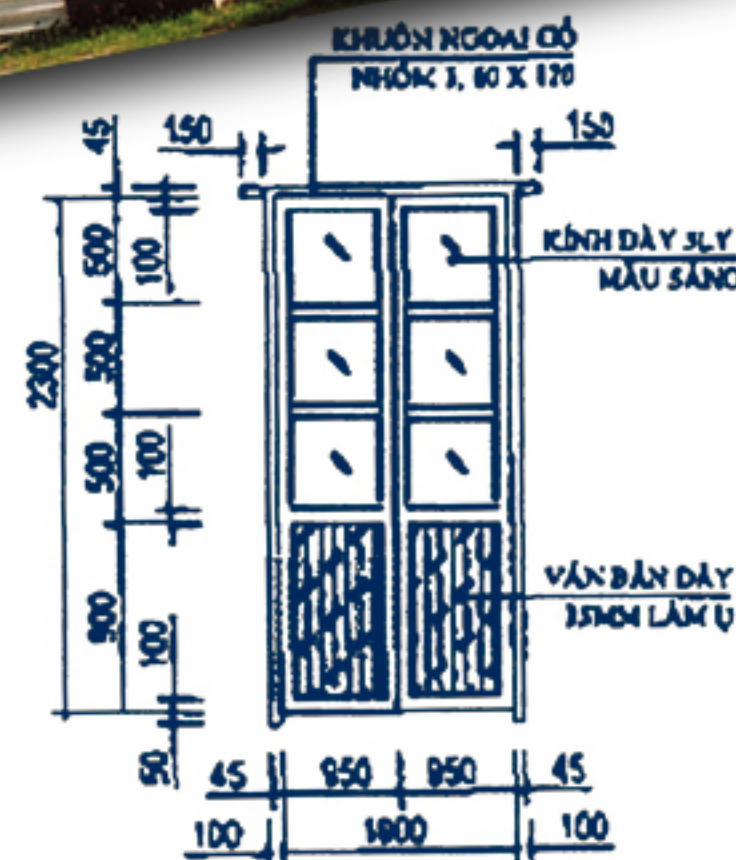
The Cam Lo building's distinctive architecture is typical of Library Project structures – an imposing, two-story columned facade with large reading rooms on each of the two levels. Books are kept on the upper level in case of flooding. An inclined gallery that wraps around the building provides handicapped access to the upper level.



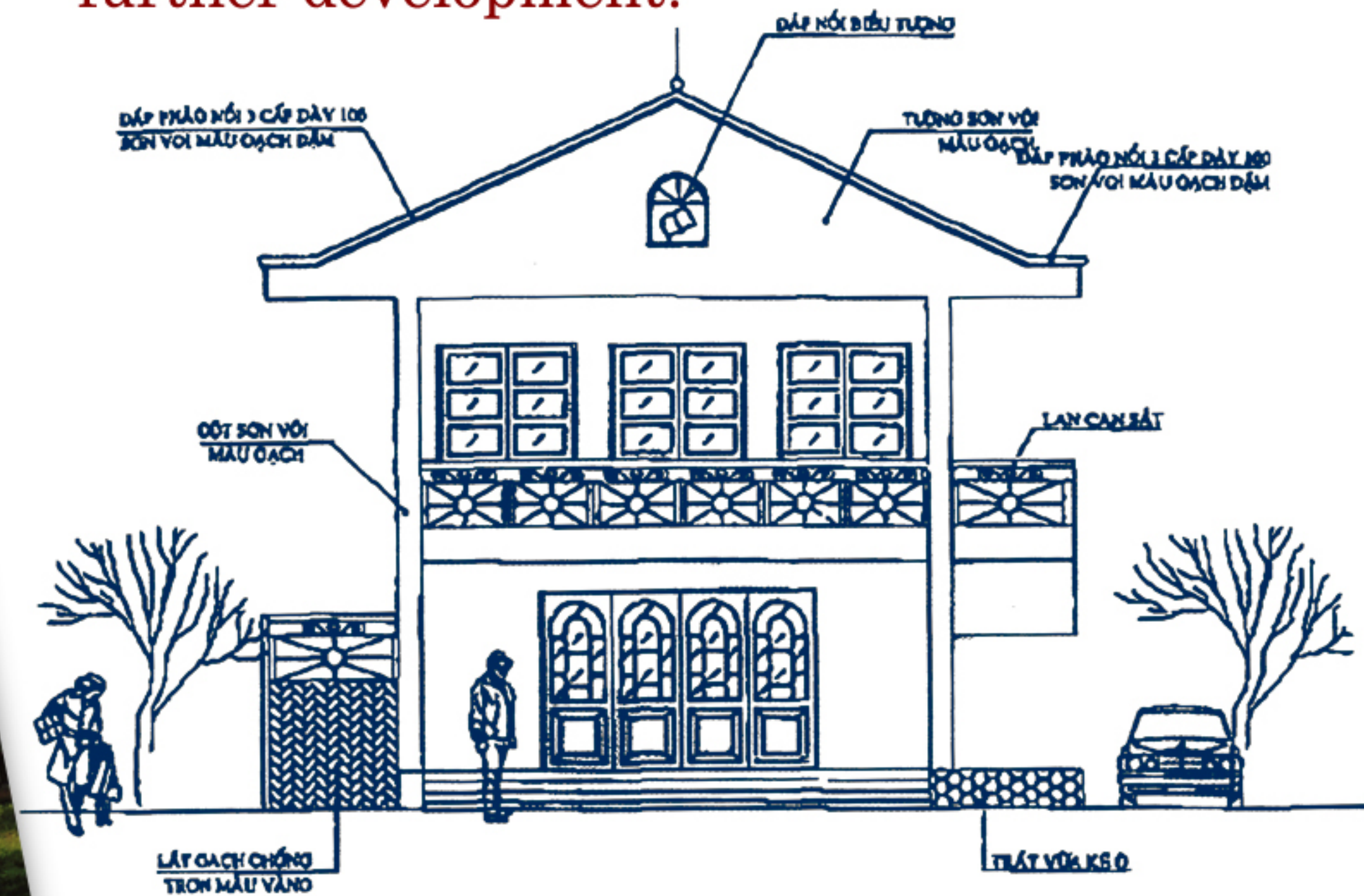




CHỈ CHỈ:  
 - TOÀN BỘ CỬA ĐƯỢC GỖ NHÓM 3 ĐÁNH VÉCH  
 - KHUÔNG CỬA 60 X 120, KHUÔNG CỬA 100 X 50,  
 LẮP KÍNH DÀY 5 LY MÀU SẮNG, GỖ HỒA SẮT BẢO VỆ



Project libraries are built by local contractors, providing an economic stimulus to the local economy and a catalyst for further development.



MẶT ĐÚNG TRỤC 1 - 2

Construction is supervised by local officials, using standardized plans provided by the Library Project. Most libraries feature a formal columned facade that echoes traditional American library architecture. A gallery that wraps completely around the building provides access to the second floor.





With a budget of \$35,000 – and sometimes even less – the Library Project can build a facility that will serve as a community's cultural centerpiece and a catalyst for future growth. The libraries are monuments to lifelong learning, as well as a lasting reminder of the value of international cooperation.



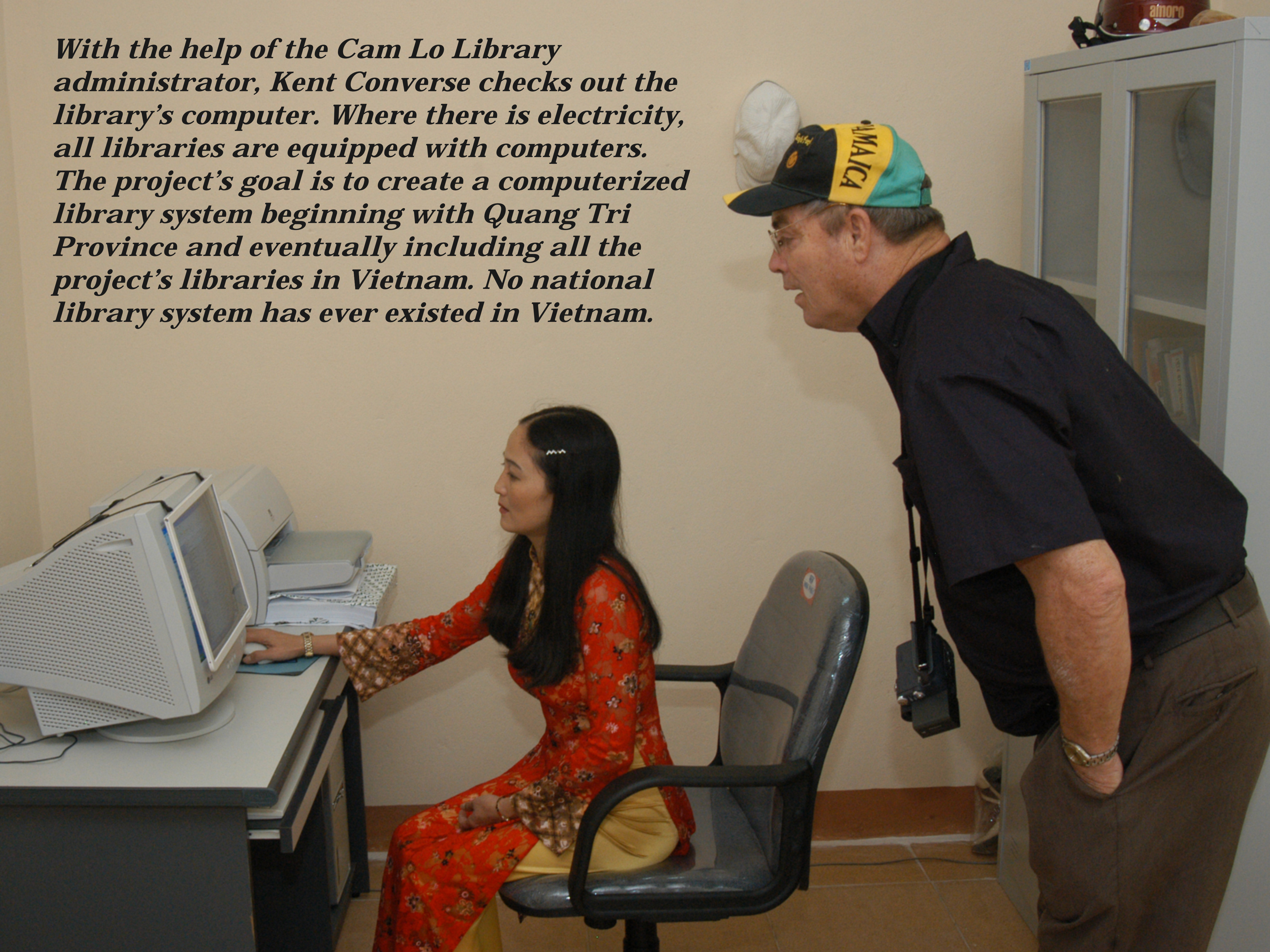


libraries typically feature large, well-lighted reading rooms on both levels, as well as offices, computer rooms and other facilities.



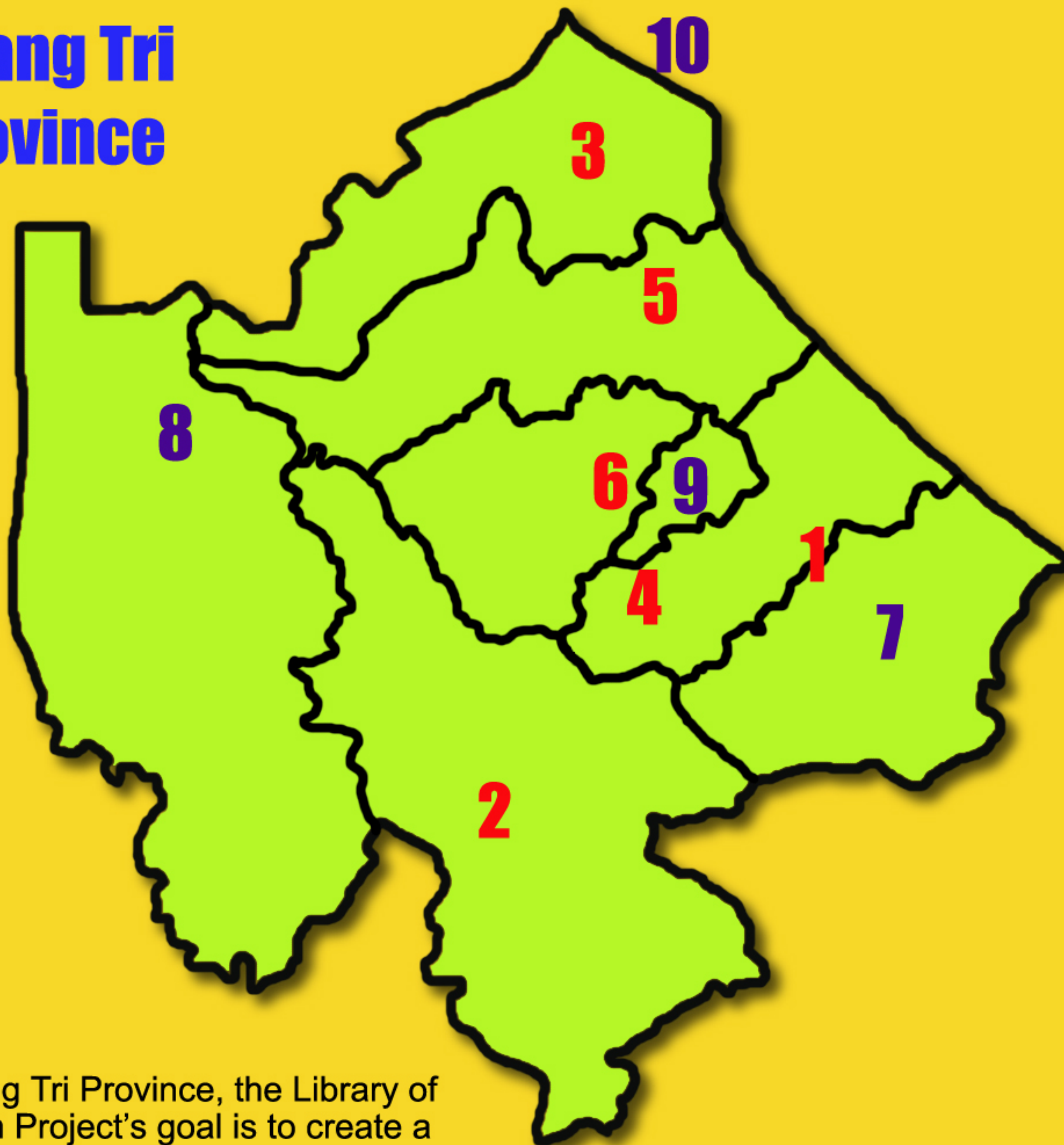


*With the help of the Cam Lo Library administrator, Kent Converse checks out the library's computer. Where there is electricity, all libraries are equipped with computers. The project's goal is to create a computerized library system beginning with Quang Tri Province and eventually including all the project's libraries in Vietnam. No national library system has ever existed in Vietnam.*





# Quang Tri Province



In Quang Tri Province, the Library of Vietnam Project's goal is to create a complete library system linked by the internet and by a bookmobile that will allow individual libraries to share books, periodicals, teachers and cultural programs.

The long-term goal is to create a national library system with libraries in each of the country's 59 provinces. Vietnam has never had a national library system.

## Completed Projects

1. Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Fund Library, Quang Tri Town
2. Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Fund Library, Khe Sahn/Dak Rong
3. Theusch Family Library, Vinh Linh
4. Dr. James R. Langworthy Library, Trieu Phong
5. George N. Wright Memorial Library, Gio Linh
6. American Families Library, Cam Lo

## Proposed Projects

7. Hai Lang District
8. Huong Hoa District
9. Dong Ha Town
10. Dau Con Co Island



uring a meeting in the town of Quang Tri, Theusch updates province officials on the progress of library projects, as Mike Meyer and Kent Converse listen. Ten libraries in Quang Tri Province have been completed or are under construction. Since founding the Vietnam Library project in 2000, Theusch has developed close friendships with Vietnamese leaders in government and education.







atched by an audience of students, right, Theusch  
received flowers during the dedication of a library at  
Quang Tri High School







ran Dinh Song, left, the Library Project's representative in Vietnam, interprets as Nguyen Thanh Ngai, head of the Cam Lo People's Committee, dedicates the new library. Song, whom Theusch credits as the source of the idea for building libraries in Vietnam, has worked for the foundation as an unpaid volunteer since meeting Theusch in 1999.







*Retired U.S. Army  
Command Sergeant  
Major Sam Raber  
signs an autograph  
for a young admirer.*



U NGHIA CỘNG  
V. I LÊ-NIN

*Mike Meyer, executive director of the nonprofit Coalition to Salute America's Heroes, lights incense in front of a plaque dedicated to the late George N. Wright, who received a Bronze Star for his service in Vietnam. The Gio Linh library is named in Wright's honor.*





*Library projects often focus on children, who represent the nation's future. Vietnamese children frequently do well in math, because problems can be worked out on a blackboard, but literacy often suffers in poorer areas where books, paper and school supplies are scarce.*













NƯỚC CỘNG HÒA XÃ HỘI CHỦ NGHĨA VIỆT NAM MUÔN NĂM

TR. THCS PHỔ THUẬN

HỘI THI  
ĐỐ VUI ĐỂ HỌC





or Western Kansas farmer Kent Converse, a Vietnam trip provided an opportunity to attend a graduation party at the Le-Ditzel Library in Ho Chi Minh City for Ngat Dao, left, and Nguyen Thi Trang, two Vietnamese women he put through college. Converse, a helicopter pilot who was shot down in the Mekong Delta during the Vietnam War, also built the Kent Converse-Kinsley Rotary Unification Library in Kien Giang Province.







*Some libraries  
in the Mekong  
Delta are  
accessible only  
by boat.*







*The Roland G. Fontaine Library in Hoa Ninh is built in the center of the remote Mekong Delta community, next to a Buddhist shrine. The entire community turned out for the dedication ceremony.*





*Children watch through a window as Theusch and Song speak during the dedication of the Roland G. Fontaine Library in a Mekong Delta village near Vinh Long.*







# *The Library of Cambodia Project*





In Cambodia, approximately one-fourth of the country's population died in the Khmer Rouge genocide in the late 1970s. In a nation so touched by war and poverty, the Library Project recently began working to build a library in Banlung.

It also is helping to support a small private library in the community of Angsoeng near the Cambodian "Killing Fields."







More than 2 million  
Cambodians lost their lives  
during the Khmer Rouge  
“killing fields” genocide  
during the late 1970s. This  
Buddhist temple near  
Angsoeng was used as prison  
and torture facility.

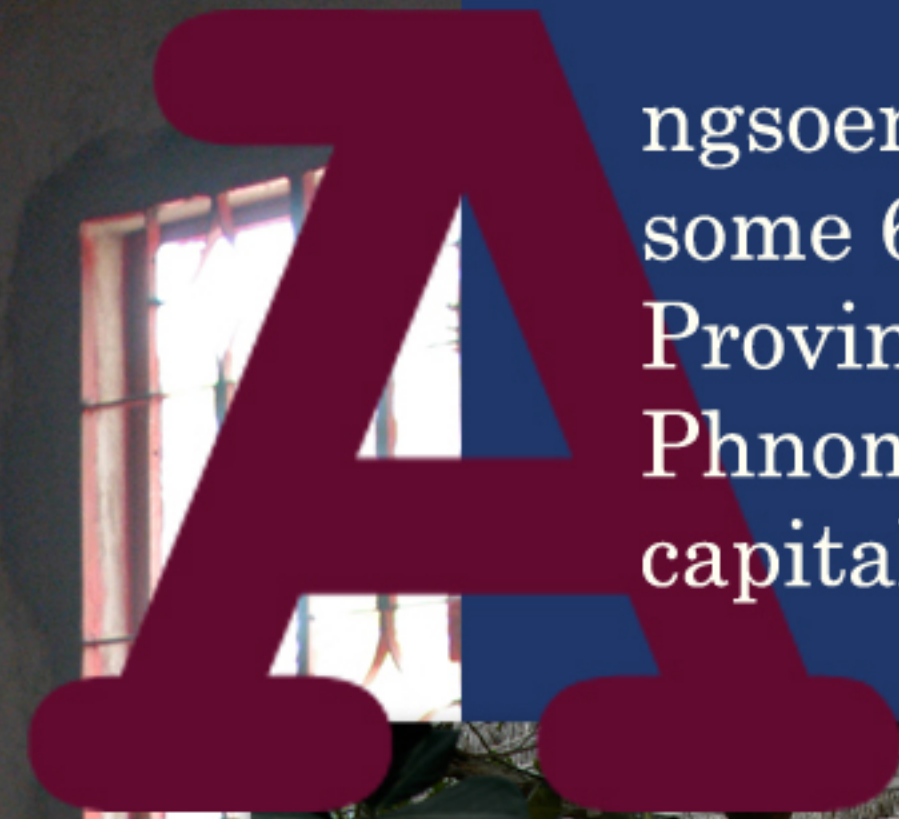




ambodian journalist Lor Chandara, who covers government and politics for the English-Language *Cambodia Daily*, turned his family's home in the village of Ang Soeng into a library and school. He says that although his mother, below, doesn't understand the need for a library, he is determined to provide educational opportunities for the children of the village.







ngsoeng Library currently serves some 600 children in rural Takeo Province about 25 miles south of Phnom Penh. Although born in the capital city, Chandara came to Takeo as a child when he and his widowed mother were evacuated during the Khmer Rouge regime. Cambodia's first and largest private rural library, it is volunteer-run and funded entirely by donations.





One of the goals for the Ban Lung project is to bring internet-based medical education such as that provided by the Sihanouk Hospital in Phnom Penh to the Ban Lung Hospital adjacent to the library site.





*The  
Library  
of Laos  
Project*





Laos is one of Southeast Asia's poorest countries. In poor villages without electricity, high-school students study in dark rooms with dirt floors. Even "Small Dreams" libraries, which can be built for as little as \$5,000, will make a huge difference in the lives of children here.







# The Library of Laos Project

1. Worley/Engelken Library, Pakxe City, Champasak Province
2. Nettavong-Sayvisith/John Zutz Milwaukee Beerfest Library, Kean Village, Savannakhet Province
3. U.S. Army Special Forces Hospital/Doug and Janey Fuller Library, Peuikao Village, Savannakhet Province
4. Nong Het Library, Xiang Khoang Province





ຫ້າສະໝຸດ ແຂວງຈຳປາສັກ  
CHAMPASAK LIBRARY

The Worley/Engelken  
Library in Pakxe, Laos



heusch and Ross  
Worley, CEO of  
Wallties & Forms,  
Inc., and one of the  
Library Project's  
strongest supporters,  
confer with the  
administrator of the  
Worley/Engelken  
Library in Pakxe,  
Laos.







*On one evening in Pakxe, shoes, below, await the return of their owners studying in the upstairs reading room.*







American generosity is well known. Your support of this effort, no matter its size or form, whether a contribution of books, money, time, or expertise, is still another testimony to the heart of what we in Vietnam call Americans, ‘Nuoc My’ ... meaning ‘Beautiful People.’

– The Hon. Le Van Bang, former Vietnamese ambassador to the United States

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**To join the Library of Vietnam Project family by making a financial donation or by contributing other resources, contact:**

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