# Publishing students join hands with the Presidency to build school libraries

**As part of the JCP module of the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Information Technology, all Publishing Studies students are required to contribute 40 hours of community service to complete their degrees. The JCP module is unique, as it encourages students to participate in community development in their own areas, providing not only development for much-needed community infrastructures, but it also allows students to give back to the community, developing their personal skills.**

This year, six schools that were in need of libraries were identified. From the beginning of June, the six student groups identified the needs of the libraries of Boikgantsho Primary and Pfundzo Primary in Mamelodi, Jakaranda Primary in Eersterust, Boschkop Primary in Boschkop, and Sunnyside Primary and Jopie Fourie Primary in Pretoria. By the start of the June recess, the students were ready to start painting and sorting books. Their first task was to identify which books the school already had that could be reincorporated into the library and which books were needed.

The aim throughout this process was to be as representative of all the languages in South Africa as possible. Invaluable support was received from several industry partners. Bargain Books Woodlands donated thousands of rands worth of stock in the classics, fiction and non-fiction genres. LAPA Publishers, NB Publishers and e-Books Lynnridge donated fiction in official languages, specifically English, Afrikaans, Zulu and Sepedi. With these donations, the students were able to start work on their libraries.

Being approached by the Presidency to make the project part of their Mandela Day celebrations opened doors to new donations and more volunteers. This partnership proved very fruitful, with over 70 volunteers from the Presidency arriving at the schools on Mandela Day to help finish off the libraries. The partnership allowed for increased government involvement in charitable activities and exposed the students to governmental processes.

The identified schools were treated to readings by Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) personnel from the Presidency, who encouraged them to stay in school and embrace education as the only way to further oneself.

All six schools received donations of carpeting, heaters and pot plants from Builders Warehouse and shelving from the Presidency, as well as several book donations collected by the Presidency in African languages. This project serves as a shining example of what the partnership between industry and the University of Pretoria is capable of. It is only through these kind donations of industry partners that the project was successful. The students themselves are happy and satisfied with what they have achieved with the project, contributing not only to their own degrees and abilities, but also to their knowledge of their future reading market and their industry leaders.

The students and the Publishing Studies Department in the School of Information Science intend to continue the project in the future with the help of the Faculty of Engineering, the Built Environment and Information Technology and the JCP module.

Students, staff and industry partners were encouraged to contribute what they can to help the community and provide access to books and basic literacy in underdeveloped schools, as literacy is a basic and invaluable right of all children in South Africa. As Erin Rennie, one of the students involved in the Boikgantsho Primary school library stated: "We know how important reading and literacy is and we want to encourage it from a young age. If you can help, you should, especially with something as important as this."

The Department of Publishing Studies hopes to rely on its current industry partners in future and involve this group of students as mentors. It is vitally important not only to build libraries in needy communities, but also to encourage a sense of the importance of community engagement in our students and industry partners. ◑