

Post-Trip Report – EWB-PU Ghana Team

Acknowledgments

The EWB-PU Ghana Team would like to thank the Class of 1995 Summer Service Fund for the generous funding they provided for the Ghana School Library Initiative. The project would not have been possible without this grant award. The following report outlines the purpose of our monitoring trip to Ashaiman, Ghana and the accomplishments that were made.

Sincerely,

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Overview and Goals

The 2012 monitoring trip to Ashaiman, Ghana took place between August 13th and August 26th 2012. There were four students (Jeremy Blair '13, Alex Creely '14, Jessica Liu '15, Adam Suczewski '15) and one professional mentor (Ashwatha Narayana) on the travel team. A monitoring trip is one in which the travel team assesses the structural integrity and community impact of a project, but does not attempt any additional construction. Small repairs may be addressed as needed.

The goal of the trip was to determine whether or not the community was ready to take full ownership of the library. The metrics that we used were visitor numbers, state of the building, state of the digital and print materials, and community impact. As such, we evaluated the building from both an engineering standpoint and a cultural standpoint. Additionally, we added a more sophisticated cataloging system to allow patrons to search through the catalog using a variety of different filters.

Accomplishments and Impacts

The building was in very good structural shape, requiring only a small number of screw replacements on the roof where our contractor had bent the screws, causing leakage during the rainy season. There were approximately 20 to 30 visitors every day, and the librarian asserted that these numbers were relatively representative, possibly even low since our trip coincided with the students' summer break. Additionally, we noted that a third or more of children using the library were from the surrounding community but did not attend the EP school, which indicated that the community as a whole was taking advantage of the new resources. We were impressed with the state of the upkeep and management of the library, and transferred full ownership of the library to the EP school at the conclusion of the trip.

Even though there were no large scale implementation projects on this monitoring trip, all members of the team had a chance to experience real world engineering problems first hand. The small roofing repair allowed us to experience the logistical and technical concerns that characterize construction projects. Meanwhile, our extension of the catalog system exposed us to

the realities of internet availability and usage in developing countries and how innovative integration of even simple technologies can greatly increase the impact of a project.

In particular, we were able to see just how much of an impact an education project can have on the larger development goals of a community. Library attendance and school enrollment figures showed us the levels of enthusiasm that were present for the new found access to the library's educational resources. We and the community hope that, with the completion of the Achieving Greater Heights Community Library, the next generation in Ashaiman can grow, learn, prosper, and give back in a way that was previously impossible.

During the trip, we forged strong relationships with members of the Ashaiman community, and these relationships were instrumental in both completing the project successfully as well as enriching the experience on a personal level. Our experiences in such a vibrant but certainly foreign culture remind us of the value of cross-regional exchange, while at the same time illuminating the discrepancies between different sections of the global population and the development challenges that still exist.

Future Work

Now that our monitoring trip is complete and ownership of the library has been completely turned over, we are now beginning the EWB-USA close out process. We are currently compiling two reports needed to official close the program and we will be submitting these in mid-October. We will continue to be in contact with the administrators of the library to ensure its long term success.



