



Above, author Nicholas A. Basbanes speaks at the library's dedication. Left, Lt. Col. Brian McNerney oversees the arrival of boxes of books donated by WWII veterans at LSA Anaconda in Iraq.

Upon arriving for his one-year deployment at LSA (Logistical Support Area) Anaconda near Balad, Iraq, in December 2005, Lt. Col. Brian McNerney noticed there was no library serving the 20,000 troops and civilians there—so he quickly set out to create one.

McNerney, public affairs officer for the U.S. Army's 3d Corps Support Command, took up a standing offer for help from Robert Patton and Mickey Dorsy—two World War II veterans he had met in Germany earlier in the year—by

asking them to collect books for the library. In just a few months, the library was transformed from an empty room to one with a collection approaching 10,000 volumes.

The Halbert and Red Circle Memorial Library, located at the camp's education center, opened March 16, and McNerney proudly reports he was able to bring Nicholas A. Basbanes, author of *Every Book Its Reader: The Power of the Printed Word to Stir the World* (HarperCollins, 2005), to speak at the dedication. "This is just an extraordinary

opportunity to do what I have written five books about—celebrations of books, book people, book culture, and libraries," Basbanes said.

McNerney's goal for the library is to not only serve soldiers, but to benefit the local community as well. "I have about six more months remaining here, and intend to start delivering some of the books to local Iraqis in the town of Balad, where all of the books will ultimately find a home once we Americans leave, as a gift to the people of Iraq," McNerney told *American Libraries*.