



Frequently Asked Questions

How did Operation Medical Libraries (OML) start?

Operation Medical Libraries, formerly known as UCLA Medical Alumni Association *Books without Borders*, was conceived and created after the organization received an email from Laura Pacha, M.D. '98, an Army officer, regarding the lack of current medical materials for Iraqi physicians and medical students. Subsequently, the program's mission expanded to include developing countries. In spring 2008 the name was changed to Operation Medical Libraries (OML) due to a name conflict with an unrelated organization.

Why is there a high demand for medical textbooks and journals?

Due to the lack of electricity, slow access, and limited availability, it is difficult for most doctors and medical students in developing or war-torn countries to access Internet resources. As a result, they have to rely heavily on medical textbooks for formal and continuing education.

Afghanistan is one of the most impoverished countries. The education of Afghan students is always hampered by a scarcity of resources. As such, the medical textbooks sent by Operation Medical Libraries will be an invaluable asset to Afghan students and will enrich their medical education. I thank all of the schools and organizations that contributed to this book drive.

Khaled Hosseini, M.D.
 Afghan-American author
Kite Runner & A Thousand Splendid Suns

It is an innovative idea that resonates well with the United States at a time when the image of the United States around the world is not as high as it once was.

Congressman Henry Waxman
 D-Los Angeles, 30th District

What role does the U.S. military play in OML?

As part of Host Nation Building, the U.S. military works with local medical universities, hospitals, and physicians to improve the quality of medical education and health care. Medical Corps and Nurse Corps representatives contact OML in search of much needed health sciences (dental, medical, nursing, physical therapy) textbooks. The military distributes the donated materials to the foreign medical professionals.

What are the shipping logistics?

The OML Website provides an up-to-date list of who needs medical textbooks and their mailing addresses. The donor mails the books directly to the recipient. Shipped boxes take a few weeks to reach their destination. By including a note with the shipment, the donor may request a delivery confirmation to be sent via E-mail by the recipient.

What is the cost to mail the medical materials?

Although the textbooks are being sent overseas, all materials sent to U.S. military representatives, go through the U.S. Army Post Office (APO) and are calculated on the domestic rate. It costs about 50 cents a pound when mailed to a military representative's APO via the USPS Media Mail rate. The most economical rate for all other recipients is USPS International Priority Large Flat Box Rate at \$49.95 with a 20 pound limit.



What are the requirements for the shipment boxes?

Boxes should weigh less than 25 pounds. Shipments sent to APO addresses cannot use "recycled" liquor boxes or any other box that says it has bottles inside. Shipments to non-military representatives will be packaged in a USPS International Priority Flat Box, which is available at any U.S. Post Office branch.

Are U.S. Customs Clearance and Dispatch Notes Required?

Each box requires a U.S. Customs Clearance and Dispatch Note (PS form 2976-A) and a clear envelope. These are available at no charge at any U.S. Post Office branch. Instructions on how to complete the customs form is on the OML Website. There is an on-line customs form, but it is not recommended for shipments with boxes of varying weight and book quantities.

What other items do OML recipients need?

Medical professionals in developing countries need everything from scrubs, microscopes, and stethoscopes to medical textbooks and visuals written in Arabic and Dari. Medical universities have requested multiple copies of a single book title.

I am surprised at this extraordinary gift from Operation Medical Libraries and hope that this begins a long and fruitful relationship. We share the goals of education that go beyond borders.

G. N. Aram, M.D.
 Dean of Herat Medical Faculty, Afghanistan