

Feeling a Little Hungry? Here's Some Food for Thought

Hungry minds are receiving a little nourishment at the *Orphelinat des Garçons de Bingerville* (OGB) in Cote d'Ivoire, West Africa! Visiting librarian, Kim Piot, has been working with students, administrators, and the library staff at this elementary boarding school for orphaned and poor boys to help develop a computer center and update their library with new books, videos, dvds...and the Mandarin M3 library automation system.

On an extended leave of absence from her position at *Hudson County Schools of Technology (HCST) in New Jersey*, who donated 10 computers to the orphanage, Ms Piot is working for the *International Community School of Abidjan (ICSA)*, an American curriculum K-12 school, and Mandarin Oasis Web hosted client.



Ms Piot was sold on Mandarin from the start, since ICSA and other librarians in the area had used the Mandarin M3 system as a cost effective solution for international schools in struggling economies. ICSA, an M3 client and once one of the premier schools of its kind, greatly downsized during the recent crisis in the country. Now back on the upswing, one of their first goals was to upgrade their Library and Information Technology Center, including an upgrade to the OASIS ASP Web hosting, which is hosted by Mandarin Library automation.

Thanks to an efficient, knowledgeable and "always available" support team, the M3 to Oasis hosting transition was smooth and seamless, according to Ms. Piot. "I just zipped our database of some 20,000 volumes, and approximately 500 users, to a file and sent it to Art and the Mandarin support team over the internet by FTP. The support team did the rest. In a day or so, the system was up and running, and now students and staff are able to search the catalog from the lab, or at home. Teachers and students are searching for and printing

their own bibliographies and the library and e-library blog are getting more views and use."

Envisioning a future in which ICSA and OGB might one day share resources, Ms Piot discussed her ideas with the Mandarin team, and they gave lots of great ideas and cost-effective solutions. As she embarks on the installation of the M3 program at OGB, they even provided a French speaking support person for the OGB staff to speak with. "What's more, now that we've got our Oasis system operating here at ICSA, the orphanage is able to search our collection for our French language books. We hope to establish an interlibrary loan type of service between the two schools eventually, and since they are about half an hours drive from here, it makes a lot of sense for them to be able to check our catalog on-site."

Inspired by the project, several students at ICSA have also begun the "InfoPros for Peace Club" to help set up the computer lab, work on an library blog for the school, and promote the "Food For Thought Book Drive." Parents in the schools Parent Teacher Organization recently raised over \$200.00 for books which they distributed to the school a couple of weeks ago, and which are to be the first to be cataloged in their new M3 system in the coming weeks. For more information, please visit <http://childrenofthediasporaunited.blogspot.com> or the ICSA e-Library Blog at <http://litcebrary.wordpress.com>.