

# “Whatever you bind on Earth...”

## or tied-down libraries

by Neil Wiebe

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All of us in SIL recognize the value of making literature available to the people we seek to serve. This article-commercial describes a simple method of enhancing this goal.

Living next door to a Chachi tribal school, we often have children (as well as others) come to our house asking for a “peek” at a magazine. A “peek” is here defined as a perusal lasting anywhere from 60 seconds to 60 minutes. We have sought to find a practical and time saving (for us) solution to satisfy the people’s desire for literature.

Our answer has been a simple reading desk placed on our front porch, with selected literature tied to the desk. We built two different types of desks.

1. A wide board was cut into three pieces, forming the desk top and two legs. Another narrower board joined the desk top to the legs at the back to make it sturdy.
2. A reading desk, consisting simply of a wide board, suspended in front of a bench by ropes attached to the rafters. (This allows for ease in sweeping the floor.)

Each week we would rotate the literature: a selection of translated Scriptures, annotated scrapbooks, and pictorial magazines, such as National Geographic. This literature was a mixture of tribal and national language material (and English in the case of some pictorial magazines).

(1983). *Notes on Literacy*, 39.

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Advantages of this tied-down library are:

1. The people can use the library independently, rather than needing supervision in the use and return of the literature.
2. Literature is always available to regular, as well as casual visitors, whether literate or not.
3. The literature is often a source of entertainment for those who come on an errand, but who are culturally bound not to state their purpose immediately.
4. Fuel is provided for small talk that is a little larger than the “How are the kids-chickens-and-bananas-doing?” routine. Sometimes the way is opened for Christian witness.

In any library facility, protection of the materials is a valid consideration.

1. The spines of booklets and magazines can be reinforced in several ways. We nail-punched three sets of holes in National Geographic magazines to strengthen the binding with string. Even better would be some type of clamp running the entire length of the binding.
2. The pages of booklets can be covered with clear adhesive plastic. For small leaflets or booklets, this can also be done with clear plastic bags of the right size. Separate the pages, enclose each sheet in a sealed plastic bag, and re-staple the binding.

But, literature should be used rather than merely preserved. You can multiply the benefits by enlisting, at other locations, those who will assume responsibility to circulate the literature. Why not introduce Christian and science reading rooms throughout the land?