Anne Shepherd has a huge task ahead.

Shepherd, head librarian for the fledgling Baton Rouge Community College, and a student worker have about 75 days to figure out how to catalog, pack, transport, unload and shelve about 10 tons of brand-new library books.

They’ve enlisted help from librarians and other book lovers throughout the area.

The books are being stockpiled in the community college’s temporary headquarters on the LSU campus.
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The move from temporary lodgings off Nicholson Extension begins June 1 — almost three months before the first student will show up for class on Aug. 20.

Laid end to end, the library's initial 15,000 books would measure about three miles, Shepherd said.

"They could just about reach from here (the community college's office at LSU) to the new college," Shepherd said.

Getting the new school ready for students is "a daunting task," Shepherd said.

The college is a federal court-ordered component of a 1994 desegregation settlement agreement, but has attracted widespread support.

With the opening of the campus now set for July 19, attention is beginning to shift from planning for a new school to getting the school ready for students.

As a result, Shepherd is not the only one with plenty of work ahead.

Director of Human Resources John Pitzel and help he borrows whenever the student worker isn't otherwise occupied, is working late nights to sort through faculty applications that numbered 850 by Friday afternoon.

"I generally get my second wind about 11:30 (at night)," Pitzel said.

The 850 applications don't include third-party nominations, or applications that will be accepted next week if they have been postmarked by March 13. Sandra Williams, associate dean for academic affairs, and anyone she can recruit for help will sort through faculty applications to find candidates for interviews.

"We're so small that everybody serves on every committee," Shepherd said, discussing the monumental process of hiring a faculty.

The goal is to have about 24 full-time positions filled by mid-May. The new teachers will then submit their course plans so that books and other materials can be ordered to stock the student book store.

At least 150 new computers have to be installed. Gene Fields, who is overseeing the computer network for the college, led state officials from the Office of Telecommunications through the building Friday to inspect the layout.

Construction of the new building is ahead of schedule. "These guys work every single day. Saturdays, Sundays, holidays," college Chancellor Marion Bonaparte said. "Well, not Mardi Gras. That's the only day they took off."

As of Friday, with just over five months to go before the first day of class, the community college had accumulated more than 600 applications from prospective students.

Officials had originally expected to reach 700 applicants by mid-August.

Director of Enrollment Services Edwin Litolff said that each month since September, the pace has quickened, increasing the number of new applicants about 20 percent over the previous month.

"This is their hope and dream," Litolff said.

Litolff will oversee registration for students beginning in about two weeks. Litolff is putting together the college's catalog, working out programs to advise students and gathering data from students.

Student registration will take place one student at a time or with small groups of about 10 students per week over a gradual period so that course offerings can be revised along the way depending on student demand, Litolff said. "This thing is happening so fast, there's no time to panic," Litolff said. "You would be overwhelmed if you looked at the whole picture all at once, so I don't. I just take it one job at a time."