



MEMORY OF MODERN EGYPT

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Memory of Modern Egypt
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VISION AND OBJECTIVES

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) strives to preserve the past and provide universal access to knowledge for future generations. The International School of Information Science (ISIS), a BA-affiliated research institute, uses the latest technology to further this goal by creating digital libraries. The 'Memory of Modern Egypt' project is a joint endeavor between ISIS and the BA's Special Projects Department – whose duties revolve around documentation and the production of original material – to produce a definitive repository for culturally and historically significant material pertaining to the modern state of Egypt, thus preserving these materials in digital form and making them available to all in an online archive. The immense amount of materials available in the repository are primary sources produced during the concerned time period, from the era of Mohamed Ali in 1805 to the end of Sadat's presidency in 1981, providing an authentic and comprehensive insight into Egypt's rich history that no other single library or collection can offer.

CONTENT

The 'Memory of Modern Egypt' repository includes 14 different material types, divided into documents, speeches, photographs, movies, audios, maps, books, essays, news, covers, currency, medals, stamps and advertisements, collected from a number of sources. Families of some of the significant figures featured on the repository, such as Prime Minister Mohamed Mahmoud Pasha and members of the politically active Botroseyya family, have provided the BA with access to their private collections. Scanning units were set up in Dar Al-Hilal, the National Archives of Egypt (Dar Al-Mahfouzat), and Dar Akhbar Al-Youm to add their collections to the repository after their staff was trained to deal with indexing and scanning of the material. In addition to these sources, ISIS has integrated its Digital Assets Repository (DAR) with the 'Memory of Modern Egypt', so that the relevant books

in DAR can be accessed directly from the 'Memory of Modern Egypt'.

Through the 'Memory of Modern Egypt', the user can access:

- Over 20,000 photos of famous figures and important events in Egyptian history;
- Over 11,000 documents related to subjects such as the formation of ministries and political parties, wars and revolutions, etc;
- About 1,200 analytical and biographical essays written by the Special Projects Department;
- Over 5,800 news clippings gathered from various newspapers and magazines;
- 65 unique maps;
- Over 1,000 speeches by different rulers and prime ministers, covering diverse topics and events;
- Over 140 audio recordings, including songs, speeches, and interviews with figures from various fields;
- More than 250 video recordings, mostly of rare quality;
- More than 540 historical advertisements for different goods and services;
- Over 950 covers of magazines, newspapers, novels, albums, and film posters;
- About 290 currencies, both coins and notes;
- Over 380 stamps commemorating significant people and events in modern Egyptian history;
- About 100 medals awarded to different figures; and
- Relevant books accessed through DAR.

KEY FEATURES

The Memory of Modern Egypt offers an exceptionally user-friendly interface that reflects the multi-dimensionality of the featured material. The repository is structured into five main themes: Rulers, Prime Ministers, Subjects, Events,

and Public Figures. Each of those themes is further divided into sub-themes, hence creating an index of more than 500 dimensions. A single item may belong to more than one dimension representing the connection between related people, subjects or events. Each item in the repository is also categorized according to the material type (photograph, video, or others), which creates an index of 14 different types. A user may choose to enter the website by content type or by theme, and then further filter the material included under other themes and respective sub-themes. Such cross-referencing between the two indices—material type and themes—presents an exceptionally multi-dimensional web of materials and themes. It also allows the user to visually explore all the connections between the content of the repository and the significant figures and events in modern Egyptian history.

Due to the diversity of the visual material available, the repository features a number of different viewers that are appropriate to each type of material and thus further enhance the user's browsing experience. Additionally, a timeline feature allows the user to easily limit available material to a specific time period at any point during browsing.

The search tools available in the 'Memory of Modern Egypt' repository provide a number of options for finding desired material. The user may choose to perform a simple global search, an advanced search within a material category, or an advanced search on all materials with certain criteria, and may perform one of three types of linguistic searches – exact, stem-based, and morphological.

After over three years of meticulous efforts and collaboration, the Memory of Modern Egypt project was launched in October 2008. The project, however, is by no means complete. The repository was created with an elaborate and extensive infrastructure that would allow for the continuous addition of material, and the BA anticipates future contribution of material from other parties to further expand the repository's depth and breadth.