

**INTERNATIONAL FRIENDS OF THE BIBLIOTHECA ALEXANDRINA (IFBA), 11<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING - 18, 20, 22 OCTOBER 2008 – Bibliotheca Alexandrina, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floating**

**MINUTES – Compiled 31 January - 25 February 2009. Blue text indicates agenda items for 2008; black text indicates 2007 agenda items carried over to the 2008 Annual Meeting.**

**Convener/Chairman: David Wardrop, United Kingdom Friends  
Recorder/Scribe: Rosalie Cuneo Amer, California Friends**

**I. Minutes of the October 2007 IFBA meeting**

The minutes of the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual IFBA Meeting, chaired by L. Montesini (Australia), recorded by Prof. R. Amer (Calif.), were approved by consensus. The order of business followed with agenda items IV-XIX addressed from the 2007 International Friends meeting, that were not discussed in October 2007.

**II. Need for a Formal Structure of the IFBA**

The creation of a formal structure for the IFBA was supported by S. Hassan (Germany), G. Moretti (Italy/S. Africa), and Count Wardal (Italy). The Friends acted to create an Executive Board of the International Friends of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (acted on 20 Oct. proposed by Greece, seconded by Australia), by recommending a Convener/Chairman to lead the International Friends, and nominated David Wardrop, UK Friends, for that position. The International Friends through unanimous acclamation approved the nomination of Mr. Wardrop.

Newly acclaimed Chairman Wardrop proposed the establishment of a Recorder/Scribe position to the Board, and nominated Prof. Rosalie Cuneo Amer (Chair, Calif. Friends), whose appointment was acclaimed unanimously.

In addition to the two Executive Board positions there will be four positions with representatives of the following organizations/countries, all unanimously approved:

- Egypt (TBA)
- Australia (Lorenzo Montesini)
- Greece (H.E. Andreas Zaimas)
- Nordic countries (Hans Christian Simensen, Sweden)

Term of office of the Executive Board: A term of three years was approved, beginning October 2008, with new elections in October 2011.

Note: At a later executive board meeting in the Siwan oasis, L. Montesini was asked to serve as Vice Chairman.

**III. At this point Chairman Wardrop and Scribe Amer took their positions.**

The Chairman expressed the IFBA's appreciation of the External Relations Dept. with Mona El Nashar, Nahla Helmy and other staff in communicating so effectively, coordinating arrangements for the Annual Meeting, and giving enough

time in the agenda at the 2008 meeting for working meetings (facilitated during the year by L. Montesini). The Chairman further mentioned anticipation of H.E. Ambassador Hagar Islambouly's participation in our working meetings, based upon a recommendation of L. Montesini from the October 2007 minutes.

As a follow-up to the annual meeting minutes of October 2007, two-three IFBA representatives will meet with Dr. Serageldin about ceremonial processes, e.g., future invitations to events before the end of this annual meeting.

**ACTION on 20/10/08:** A Committee on ceremonial processes was formed, composed of Chairman D. Wardrop (UK), Vice Chairman L. Montesini (Australia), and S. Hassan (Germany).

Chairman Wardrop reviewed the newly formed structure, and the need for a plan for two-three years.

Chairman Wardrop asked each Chapter representative present to introduce themselves. Representatives of the following IFBA organizations around the world gave self-introductions: Germany, Finland, Greece, Baltimore, California, Italy/South Africa, South Africa, Egypt, Norway, Sweden, Mexico, New York, Italy-Special Events, UNESCO Assn/U.S.A.

Resumption of the IFBA annual meeting agenda items not addressed in October 2007. Agenda items IV-XIX are from the 2007 meeting agenda.

#### **IV. Planning –Friends Communication – continued**

- **Worldwide Friends of the Library – encourage expansion of Chapters – Elabd was absent at meeting. To be deferred to next meeting.**
- **BA host a Utube box – D. Wardrop discussed videoclips that could be put on the Utube, like Faces of the BA (Australian exhibition). S. Hassan (Germany) spoke to recommending heads of sectors in the BA explain what they do. The BA needs to extend itself to the world. There should be pro-active dissemination monthly or quarterly on BA activities via news releases. M. El Nashar responded this can be done.**
- **Listing chpts/orgs by designator of country – state – city – etc. – Item not discussed due to absence of Friend to speak to it.**

#### **V. Develop youth and young professional groups within the worldwide Friends. Determine ways to link each other – Egyptian Friends, R. Amer**

A lengthy discussion ensued led by Prof. Amer and new Egyptian Friend, M. Al-Awady about the need for youth and young professional groups within the worldwide Friends. Prof. Amer spoke to the need for young people (university age and young professionals) who wish to communicate with others of similar ages on common issues and interests relating to the BA. How can young members in one Friends organization communicate with young members in

another organization? Ahmed Abdel-Hamid Alawady, a medical student at Al-Azhar University presented a proposal about youth involvement that was tabled. A recommendation was made that a 2009 IFBS event would include a youth initiative, including how the Egyptian youth Friends can network with other youth and young professionals in International Friends organizations in the world.

#### **VI. BA or Friends website**

- **Annual report or its digest to be added – D. Wardrop and L. Montesini discussed the dissemination of BA annual reports or a digest, thereof, to every Egyptian embassy and consulate. Posting it on the BA website was also recommended. M. El Nashar reported that all annual reports will be posted on the website under BA Publications on the home page.**
- **Qrtrly Bibliotheca Alexandrina – request adding to website – D. Wardrop recommended posting the quarterly Bibliotheca Alexandrina on the Friends website. M. El Nashar reported it is being implemented.**
- **Chairman Wardrop mentioned that the BA has made the Friends website friendlier to use.**

#### **VII. New Friends – Organizational help in forming new chpts –**

**M. Soliman was absent at meeting.**

#### **VIII. Communication of BA w/Friends Chpts. – Request responses from BA on chapter queries. Sometimes there is no response.**

**There was discussion that good communication with the External Relations Dept. exists.**

#### **IX. Collection development - Donations**

- **Disposition of Friends gifts – Letter of acknowledgement needed - - Name and address for donors – As a regular part of BA Library gift processing, library donations are now acknowledged quickly by letter through Dr. S. Wastawy's staff. Friends are content with the process. M. El Nashar commented that tracking donations is done all the time.**

#### **X. Collection development**

- **The BA Wish list on the Friends website permits access of titles needed by the Library. Friends from the UK, Baltimore, and Dr. El Abbadi commented on its effectiveness. There was a recommendation that the BA should be an archive of older mss. containing topics on the development of medicine and the history of science. There was a general consensus that the BA Wish list in addition to special projects, e.g., Patrologiae or Dr. El**

**Abbadi's Papyrology desiderata plan, did not conflict. Friends' organizations can select from either in their donations. Count Wardal suggested to Dr. Wastawy that books about religion, like copies of some of the titles in the Institut dominicain d'Etudes orientales au Caire/Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies in Cairo be considered for purchase.**

- **Would the BA be interested in prof./private collection of recent retirees? New York/New Jersey representatives who would speak to the agenda item were absent.**

**XI. Cooperation w/cultural events with other organizations –**

**Count Wardal mentioned the importance of promoting cooperation among cultural entities. 2009 is the Year of Astronomy. 2008 is the Year of Sanitation, and the potato. The Count recommended a Marconi exhibition in Egypt, and is in contact with the Italian Embassy in Cairo. Dr. El Abbadi recommended to invite Marquesa Electra Marconi, granddaughter of Marconi, and the Count responded she is invited.**

**The European Union has a budget for cultural programs, and there needs to be contact with it. Sweden recommends marketing the BA program to the EU, and exploring funding.**

**Count Wardal mentioned that the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue Between Cultures is open to all countries. Mohiba Abdelsalam of the Egyptian Friends commented that the Egyptian Friends have membership via the Alex-Med Center, so no new procedure is needed. A project needs 2 members from Mediterranean countries, like Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, with 2 members from the EU. A suggestion was made to create a list of BA Friends with membership in the EU.**

**XII. Each country/nation to formally acknowledge Friends groups –  
Dr. E. Yannakoudakis (Greece) was absent at meeting.**

**S. Camalakis of Greece addressed the issue of each country/nation to formally acknowledge Friends groups.**

**XIII. Financial security of the BA – Raise awareness – sustainability – Several members**

**This agenda item was not addressed. This issue is of high importance and should be addressed at the next Annual Meeting.**

**XIV. Rare book & works of art conference about special items in the BA**

**Agenda item not addressed.**

**XV. A BA "on loan" collection in other countries.**

**M. El Nashar may wish to address this item at next Annual Meeting.**

**XVI. Longevity of contract of Chief/Head Librarian – Longer than 3 yr contract –**

**R. Amer was advised by Friends that this agenda item is not in the jurisdiction of the IFBA.**

**XVII. Encouragement of teamwork concept across BA units – Several members.**

**A few chapter members recommended the agenda item in 2007. BA staff members may wish to report on institutional commitment to this issue at next Annual Meeting.**

**XVIII. Recommend to improve communication between the BA & the Univ. of Alex.**

**Dr. H. Sharobeen recommended that a session next year on youth participation be arranged.**

**New agenda items on 20 October 2008**

**I. Current state of history teaching in Egyptian schools. – S. Hassan**

**Dr. Sherif Hassan of the German Friends raised the topic of the thoroughness of teaching history in Egyptian schools, and wished to ascertain if all the different epochs of Egyptian history are included and handled equitably. Textbooks used in Egyptian schools should be evaluated for equitable inclusion of all major historical epochs of Egyptian history. He commented that boys and girls should learn the popular, as well as the less popular periods, and through critical thinking they will be able to evaluate successes and failures. He further recommended that textbooks should also be current. Writers should be encouraged to create new and interesting textbooks. Initiatives to write textbooks could begin in universities, ministries, and major public research libraries, like the BA.**

**II. Update on Papyrology Desiderata/Collection Development Project – Dr. El Abbadi**

**Refer to Dr. El Abbadi's letter on Papyrology. His request presented at the October 2007 meeting is asking for the IFBA to provide the core collection of the Library with papyri publications throughout Egyptian history. Such an effort will help the BA become a research center on hieroglyphic, demotic, Aramaic, Coptic, Syriac and Arabic resources. Chairman Wardrop asked what steps the Friends can take to support the Project.**

**ACTION: Add the Papyrology request to the Wish List.**

**III. Proposal from Greece- Conference Theme – H. E. Andreas Zaimas, Pres. Friends of the BA (Greece)**

**Each year a conference, symposium would be held within the International Friends Annual Meeting on a subject, philosophical, historical or social topic relating to the Bibalex. It was proposed by Dr. El Abbadi and agreed upon that the first subject would be the continuity of the history of Egypt.**

Each Friends group/chapter should solicit a paper (10-20 pages) from a scholar in one's country/state/city before the symposium to be printed and distributed to the participants. This collection of papers would be printed in book form after the symposium.

At the symposium a 15 minute summary of each paper would be presented. There would be discussion and conclusions.

The span of topics would be ancient through contemporary. Other topics which might be addressed are achievements of the ancient and modern BA. A field such as measurements, could include weights. Poetry – Literature.

Discussion ensued dealing with elements in the continuity of Egyptian history.

Mohiba Abdelsalam endorsed the proposal, Lorenzo Montesini seconded the endorsement. It was recommended that the symposium be held within the Annual Friends conference, not as a pre- or post conference event.

The subject to be discussed needs planning, recording and disseminating.

**ACTION:** A committee was formed to implement the Proposal:

H. E. A. Zaimas (Greece), Dr. M. El Abbadi (Egypt), Prof. R. Amer (Calif.)

#### IV. Logo of the BA – Count F. Wardal

There was discussion of the logo of the BA which would be used by each chapter on its letterhead. After some debate, the general comment was that the BA controls its logo. Each chapter can use its own individually designed logo.

**ACTION:** G. Perez, Chair of the Mexican Friends, is to email the logo the Mexican Friends worked on 5 years ago, which was specifically designed to represent the International Friends.

#### V. Poetry Proposal – Carmela Ruby (Calif. Friends) with expanded concept draft by D.Wardrop (UK)

C. Ruby of the Calif. Friends presented a proposal on raising the profile of poetry at the BA, and proposing the appointment of an honored poet/poetry advisor/consultant who would become a focal point for promoting poetry within the Library, its collection, throughout Egypt, to its public, and educational system. Her proposal had been discussed by the California Friends. It was then expanded in a second concept draft by D. Wardrop who named it “Alexandria: Mediterranean Centre for Poetry”, and then posted his draft soliciting comment on the original draft on the “Discussion Forum” of the IFBA website.

In the last several days C. Ruby received feedback from the International Friends on her proposal which she shared.

Discussion points on 20/10/08: Dr. El Abbadi recommends an Alexandrian Center for Poetry as the concept. "Poetry is the book of the Arabs." Count Wardal calls it the proposal a "cosmopolitan project". Layla Abdel Hady states: "It opens venues, from ancient heritage to modern times, helping Egypt archive what is has." L. Montesini states "poetry needs a residence, a house." The poetry center should connect to the BA. There needs to be a permanent place for, and a center for poetry. G. Perez indicated a willingness to translate Arabic works into Spanish.

Prof. Amer commented on the process within the California Friends, in which C. Ruby asked for comment from Laila Dowidar and her, in addition receiving comment from Dr. Amin Elmallah. Considerations included what poetry center and awards might currently exist in Egypt. What about the push/pull factors between the two largest cities in Egypt on the topic of poetry? The focus of the poetry proposal should be first on Egypt, then the Mediterranean and Middle East, and Africa.

**ACTION:** A Committee of the IFBA should be formed to go forward with the many Friends suggestions on the proposal received prior to and during the meeting, integrating them into the proposal, streamlining it and make recommendation to the IFBA. The Committee is composed of: C. Ruby, Convener (California Friends), L. Abdel Hady (BA), Dr. El Abbadi (Egypt), and the Signeuls (?) (Sweden)

- VI. Other – H. E. Hagar Islambouly commented on possible support from the BA in arranging a twin city agreement between Alexandria, Egypt and Vera Cruz, Mexico. The Mexican Friends Association have been actively involved in the arrangement.
- VII. Senior Citizens promo material proposal. Gamil Sedrak, formerly of Bayonne, New Jersey, has moved to Southern California recently, reported briefly on his activities in Orange County, UCLA and UC Irvine.
- VIII. Mexican Friends Assn of the BA Proposal – Endorsement to Certify Educational Programs – Gloria Perez
 

G. Perez (Mexico) presented a written proposal from the Mexican Friends Association on Endorsement to Certify Educational Programs, asking the BA to provide a written letter to recognize the achievements of the educational institution under consideration. After discussion, the BA staff responded that the BA does not have authority in Egypt to deal with education, i.e., it is not a degree granting institution, not considered an educational institution, and is not part of the Ministry of High Education.

**NO ACTION.**
- IX. A recommendation was made that a walk around tour of Alexandria be arranged during this annual meeting.
- X. Request for IFBA to hold a dialogue at each annual meeting.

Mohiba Abdelsalam recommended that an annual dialogue amongst the IFBA be held.

**ACTION:** It was the consensus of the IFBA to conduct an annual dialogue on a different topic at each annual meeting. On 20/10/08 the dialogue theme was “violence breeds violence.” There was lengthy discussion and participation by many chapter representatives, including from Sweden, Baltimore, Egypt, UK, California, and Italy/Italian-American.

Chairman Wardrop noted the diverse programs coordinated during the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting by several chapters of the IFBA, including The Australian Exhibition of Photographs “In the Houses of the Muses” that opened in the Conference Center on 18 Oct., the Baltimore Friends arranging Amy Riolo, American food historian and writer, to introduce her *Arabian Delights* book, the Mexican Friends coordinating a Mexican percussion concert in the evening of 19 Oct., by students from the German School in Mexico City, and the California Friends with the Readers of Homer through Prof. K. Hohlwein, arranging an all day reading of *The Iliad* in the Conference Center on 21 Oct.

#### IFBA Work Group Discussion on 22/10/08

I. IFBA Chair Wardrop reported to Ali Maher and Hagar Islambouly, that

- 1- The Annual Report should be summarized and be on the BA website.
- 2- To heighten the BA website’s activity in becoming a proactive service, the BA should disseminate its news, in monthly or bimonthly reports to the Friends, to Egyptian embassies in the world, and to supporters of Egypt.

II. Revival of the newsletter in 4 issues.

Mona El Nashar reported the quarterly newsletter will be transmitted again. Note: In 2/09 the latest BA Friends Newsletter was been posted on the IFBA website.

III. Encourage Chapters in Attending Annual Meeting

Members expressed concern about lack of participating chapters this year, such as in Spain, Portugal, Morocco, and France in not attending the annual meeting. M. El Nashar reported that lack of funding was frequently the issue in non-attendance.

IV. Chapters are to submit 10 names to recommend to the BA to invite for an introductory visit.

As proposed by L. Montesini, IFBA chapters/organizations would recommend 10 names of high level individuals who might wish to visit the BA when in the region at their own expense.

V. Recommendation for IFBA Chair to draft a letter to countries that didn’t participate in the Annual Meeting.

VI. Plan of the IFBA – Work on a 2-5 year plan

There was brief discussion on reclaiming the legacy of the Library, including addressing the role of the BA as a patron of education, exploring funding mechanisms, like student fees, encouraging avenues of scholarships, like Fulbright. Components of the BA mission, like peace, culture, international studies should be broadcasted.

#### **VII. Recommendation for an IFBA Festival event for next year**

Chairman Wardrop led a brainstorming session of chapter members discussing planning an international festival in Alexandria that will attract Alexandrians, Egyptians, Mediterraneans, Middle Easterners, Europeans, youth and others throughout the world focused upon a theme.

**Suggested Activities – Exhibits – Film Shows – Poetry Sessions –**

- **International fair with booths from foreign consulates and cultural centers in the city or from Cairo. May also include the EU.**
- **Focus upon a program like trade in the Mediterranean, e.g., between Alexandria and Barcelona. What is the Alexandria connection between itself and another city, like Barcelona, Palermo, Beirut, Cadiz? Alexandria and a western or eastern Mediterranean city.**
- **A marathon run, such as between two castles along the Alexandrian corniche**
- **A stream of young people's events to attract their creativity and participation (young Egyptian Friends with other youth to participate)**
- **Show films, such as international, or select one year, like 1963, from the world over (Egyptian Friends are interested in coordinating this event)**
- **Poetry session, such as reading ancient Egyptian poetry**
- **Historical – Cultural Program on Elements of Continuity in Egyptian History (Committee on Conference Theme given this charge)**

Chairman Wardrop was given a charge to draft a concept paper on the Alexandrian Festival event.

#### **VIII. Reading of email from Laila Dowidar in Seattle WA to the IFBA by M. El Nashar**

#### **IX. Adjournment – Late afternoon**

Respectfully submitted,

**Rosalie Cuneo Amer**  
**Professor, Chair, Calif. Friends, and Recorder/Scribe, International Friends of the BA**

**Completed 7/2/09-28/2/09**