Workgroups (Business Meeting) – 14th Meeting of the International Friends of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (IFBA)

23-26/October/2011

Bibliotheca Alexandrina – Alexandria, Egypt, Floating Room

Minutes

Convener/Chairman: David Wardrop, United Kingdom Friends
Vice Chairman: Lorenzo Montesini, Australian Friends
Recorder/Scribe: Prof. Rosalie Cuneo Amer, California Friends

1. Welcome – Chairman Wardrop opened the meeting with the comment this is the most important annual meeting in regards to change in Egypt and its impact on the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. He stated “We must listen to the Egyptian Friends to understand the ‘new Egypt’”.

2. Minutes of the October 2010 Meeting were approved unanimously, after corrections in the spelling of A. Zaimis throughout document, and retitling 6.C (p.2) content with J. Edgar’s ppt presentation “Marketing Alexandria from an Excursion to a Destination City”.

Action on 2011 minutes on 14 October 2012. Agenda numbers below reflect 14th IFBA meeting minutes of 2011.

Minutes were approved with changes that follow.

6. IFBA Election Process. Correction of R. Susann’s surname. Chapter members called for the Board to resign in order to hold the election. The Board resigned.

9. A. J. Edgar and M. Wassef presented an edited version of 9.A with commentary Correction in the 2nd sentence to read: In 2009 400 youth volunteers worked in the highly successful AlexFest . 9. C. J. Edgar and M. Wassef presented an edited version of 9.C with commentary. D. Wardrop requested the Scribe to type in the record of the minutes, reject all documentation post -2011. The minutes should be recorded as they occurred, without written commentary at a later date. The language of 9A and C, with the correction of 2010 with 2009, was reaffirmed in a vote by a majority of those present to the 2011 discussion; acknowledging two dissenting votes of 1) J. Edgar (management consultant/advisor, co-convener of AlexFest, founder of Renaissance Alexandria project) and 2) M. Wassef (cultural anthropologist and Alexfest, co-convener

13. B. S. Gamal asked for changing of language to read : Members discussed, including S. Gamal (role of Egyptian Association of University Women concentrating on raising awareness of legal rights of women and refuting religious misconceptions).

3. Adoption of the agenda for the 14th Meeting - Approved

4. Self-introduction of IFBA organizations/chapters; (Note, for inclusion in the minutes, Friends in attendance were asked to print chapter name and personal name on attendance sheet). New chapters were introduced/acknowledged by Mona El Nashar.
   A) A chapter in Monaco, the Monaco Foundation, was announced by Mona El Nashar; no representative present.
   B) Italian-Moroccan Association pour L’Art et Culture represented by Giampietro Moretti, who sends his regrets.
C) Dr. A. Khalafallah (Minnesota Friends) reported that a chapter in Cyprus would be formed by Catherine Nikita of The Nikita Lanitis Foundation in Nicosia/Limasol

D) Dr. S. Girard announced a new chapter of the Americas and Beyond, based in Berkeley, Calif.

E) A. Moslemi (Egyptian Friends) reported he helped to establish the new chapter in Khartoum, The Sudan

F) A new potential Friend from the Netherlands, Marga Grisnigt Abdel Meguid, accompanied by Alaa El-Din Abdel Meguid, are forming a new chapter, and were introduced. (As of July, the chapter has been registered and is an official member).

G) Maryem Darwiche from Chile was introduced, and indicated she plans to form a chapter.

Chairman Wardrop commented after all self-introductions, that this meeting is one of the largest Friends meeting in attendance of Friends.

5. Chairman’s communications

A) Chairman Wardrop posed the question “How do you record the moment of a revolution?” He reported that he had recommended to Dr. Serageldin the BA follow the example of the Linen Hall Library, Belfast, Northern Ireland which had collected every item relating to the civil disturbances whatever their apparent immediate importance. He was delighted to note that the BA had indeed started such a policy.

B) Within the framework of the management of the BA, and the timing of the annual meetings for the BOT in April, and the IFBA in October, has led to these two bodies operating in parallel for 9 years. Now is the time to remind the BOT what the IFBA does and the need to improve communication. We ask for a BOT report, and intend to give the BOT a report of IFBA actions.

C) Chairman Wardrop remarked on the difficulties facing Dr. Serageldin and the BA in the post-revolutionary environment.

Vice-Chairman Montesini led a discussion about how can the IFBA work more closely w/the BOT.

Chapter representatives gave several suggestions including exchange visits, a liaison relationship, changing meeting schedules to meet separately, but with the same meeting calendar, sharing minutes, discussing mission statements. The BOT mission is managerial, while the IFBA is a support organization to the BA.

J. Edgar recommended a short ppt on the IFBA be created including commentary by Dr. Serageldin.

Chairman Wardrop stated that a summary statement will be drafted.

6. IFBA Elections Process: Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and Recorder/Scribe for a two-year term

The Nominating/Elections Committee composed of A. Zaimis (Greece), A. Dahlstrom (Sweden), and E. Badr (Egypt) gave the report as follows:

- The nominations close tomorrow at 11:30 am.
- At 12 noon the Committee will review the validity of nominations.
- Voting by secret ballot will be on Tuesday at 2 pm. At 4 pm the voting results will be announced.
- Each chapter has 1 vote.
The IFBA ballot form was presented, containing the candidate name, and the proposer name.

On 23 Oct. the Committee announced nominations for the IFBA Board, recommending continuation of the three officers at a time in Egypt, in order to maintain organizational stability and transparency. The 3 Board members after some convincing, graciously accepted running again. The new term of office is for two years, concluding at the 2013 meeting, when new elections will be held. R. Susann (Germany) recommended resignation of the current Ex. Board from its duties in order to run for election. The Board members resigned. On 24 Oct. the chapters voted with 1 vote per chapter on a written ballot. Cast ballots are kept in possession of the Scribe. The election result was read by the Committee that a unanimous count of votes cast for Chairman (D. Wardrop, U.K.), Vice-Chairman (L. Montesini, Australia), and Recorder/Scribe (R. Cuneo Amer, California). Three additional members of the Board were also elected unanimously, again, E. Badr (Egypt), A. Zaimis (Greece), and A. Dahlstrom (Scandinavia) to serve for a 2-year term into the 2013 meeting. (Note: As of July, E. Badr has been re-elected as President of the EFBA for another two years.)

Discussion followed on the drafting of an IFBA Constitution and By-Laws complete with Vision, Mission statement, Goals and Objectives, the creation of a PPT summary, the planning for the 10th BA anniversary, and a 2-year plan. Sharon Girard offered to explore some of these issues.

7. Committee on Conference Theme Report. 2011 Theme: Continuity of Egyptian Heritage

-Discussion of new concepts in post-revolutionary environment

H.E.A. Zaimis and Prof. Amer, committee members, with Dr. El-Abbadi (absent) took committee advisement to add two Egyptian Friends to the committee, in order to focus on the post-revolutionary environment in Egypt. Please refer to 13. C.

8. Poetry Day, Poetry Presence and Activities within the BA – Manar Badr was absent, and Layla Abdelhady presented.

The presence of poetry and activities/programs highlighting poetry appear in several venues with the BA, in the library, art center, and Children’s library. Poetry Day was designed in 2010 with Food for Thought, suggested by Dr. M. El Abbadi.

9. Progress Reports (from previous meeting) – Chairman Wardrop and Vice Chairman Montesini chairing Reports

A. HYB Youth Initiative/Young Professionals Assn Report – Dr. A. El Awady, Chairman Wardrop

Dr. A. El Awady continued as last year in developing the HYB Initiative. Helwa Ya Balad means “how beautiful is my country.” In 2009 400 youth volunteers worked in the highly successful AlexFest. HYB was registered as an NGO in June 2011. Its Board and members are under 26 years of age. They intend to design an international seminar in 1/2012 on policy for youth. Chewikar Abdel Aziz, Head of the EAFBA Foreign Relations Committee, congratulated him and HYB which benefits the Alex community as well as all youth in Alex. When asked why IFBA was discussing the HYB Initiative, D. Wardrop reminded members that HYB had been born out of IFBA and AlexFest and that we should at all times encourage the voice of youth.

B. Encouragement/Recruitment of Chpts Attending Annual Meeting – BA 10th anniversary discussion
Several friends volunteered for Subcommittee membership with the topic above in 2010, please refer to IFBA 2010 minutes.

In absence of a Subcommittee report, considerable discussion flowed.

Africa and the Middle East: M. Moslemany reported on chapter development in Africa and the Persian Gulf. He was introduced in The Sudan to Dr. H. Tahir who has formed and registered a chapter. Tunisian and Moroccan (Casablanca) chapters are in development. Oman is planning a chapter. R. Amer (California) continues to discuss with the current Egyptian ambassador in Ankara about forming a Turkish chapter. Due to the revolution progress was delayed.

Europe: M. El Nashar reported on progress of several European chapter developments. The Monaco Mediterranean Foundation has joined the IFBA via the Anna Lindh Foundation. Audrey Pascal, who works for the Foundation, is the liaison. The Italian-Morocco Foundation has donated volumes of Bocaccio’s DeCameron to the BA collection. A new chapter in Russia has registered and their President is Medhat Elbassiouny. Through the presence of the Russian community in Alexandria, a gift of a huge Pushkin statue has been received. M. Wassef stated she helped establish a chapter in the Netherlands, a Dutch Association, which has yet to register.

Youth inclusion: El Amir Mohamed Mohsen suggested each chapter should involve young people, between ages of 18-30. A new generation of Friends needs developing. In connecting with the 10th anniversary, youth needs to participate, not exclusively in Egypt, but through international chapters.

The 10th anniversary is a great time for youth to visit the BA.

S. Hassan (Germany) commented the IFBA needs to reach out to project the BA image. Hang posters of BA in local countries. There also is the IFLA Conference in which a few BA staff attend.

C. Alexandria International Festival (AlexFest) – Status report. Vice Chairman Montesini moderating.

Considerable discussion ensued led by D. Wardrop, with commentaries by M. El Nashar, Dr. E. Badr, C. Abdel Aziz, J. Edgar, and M. Wassef. Several passionate views were presented.

D. Wardrop clarified the origin of AlexFest from 2008-2010. Alex needs an initiative which will link interests. Quoting from previous discussions, he reminded us of Mohiba Abdelsalam’s statement of a couple of years past that “Alex is an archipelago of islands.” The long term vision is the Alex Renaissance initiative. There has been a failure in constructing a continuing AlexFest Committee that works and is supported. He also stated he was no longer involved coordinating AlexFest.

The BA’s position was that it cannot support AlexFest by itself, and M. El Nashar informed us that the BA no longer supports it. Discussion followed and it was agreed to move on to the next business item. Please refer to 2. above with language clarification, There were two dissenting votes on the part of J. Edgar and M. Wassef who requested language clarification contained in 2.

D. Special U.S. Tax Deductible Account - Friends of the BA Foundation – R. Amer reported on several memorial donations through the Friends of the BA Foundation, during 2011, particularly due to the passing of Calif. Friend Helen Angelides in whose memory several thousand dollars were received. Separate donations were received from Minnesota. The funds have been successfully transferred to the BA. Rhonda Roland Shearer in New York on the BA Advisory Board handles the account for those with U.S. taxes.
E. Oral History of International Friends

L. Abdelhady who has led the oral history project for the BA, and is retiring in November, stated the value of individuals and chapters over the past twenty years who have not yet provided recorded oral histories, for the benefit of archival BA history, as well as for the 10th anniversary celebration. Several names were mentioned, Dr. Giovanni Romerio (how to contact him?), Dr. Mohsen Zahran. In addition, International and Egyptian Friends, e.g., H.E. Andreas Zaimis, Annica Dahlstrom, Fahima El Nokraschie, Federico Wardal, Mohiba Abdelsalam, Chewikar Abdel Aziz, F. Abou Ayana, and in addition former UNESCO staff Richard Holmquist, Spanish Friend Rosa del la Vesca, Norwegian architect with Snohetta (Shetyl?), Dr. Mohammed Aman of Univ. of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Mamdouh Hamza with Arab Contractors, L. Abdelhady strongly encouraged the few remaining chapters established years ago to file reports. Harry Faulkner-Brown with Balfour Beatty is deceased. The recordings can be in English, Arabic, or French.

A further suggestion was an oral history memory of the Oct. ‘02 Grand Opening (D. Wardrop, A. Zaimis, and L. Montesini, also R. Holmquist).

L. Abdelhady acknowledged the digital audio recording of the California Friends oral history, coordinated by L. Shumaker, with several Friends who have been involved for 2 decades.

The International Friends expressed deep gratitude to Layla Abdelhady for her extraordinary help with the Friends under the leadership of Drs. Zahran and Serageldin. Her development of the Poetry Day is especially valued. But above all, she was herself part of the fabric of the BA itself and will forever be in our minds as in its soul.

F. Luna Park Pre-construction Excavations – L. Montesini addressed the issue and as it stands there is no move to excavate or build on the site.

10. Securing Interim and Chief Librarians after Dr. S. Wastawy’s departure in Sp 2010,

M. El Nashar gave updated information that all hiring and promotions are halted due to lack of BA funds. L. Abdelfattah continues as Acting Chief Librarian after Dr. Wastawy’s departure.

11. Library and Other Sector Reports/Presentations from BA staff

   A. Technical Services: Cataloging and Collection development. Acting Chief Librarian, Lamia Abdelfattah was in the U.S. working on a graduate library degree, and was absent at the meeting.

   B. Library Sector – Main Library Services, including Public Services – Manar Badr, Director.

      See C. directly below.

   C. Library Sector – Special Libraries programs and activities – Dalia Hamada, Dep. Director

      The International and Egyptian Friends heard about “The BA Libraries and the Egyptian Revolution” from Dalia Hamada, who gave two ppt presentations, the first created by Manar Badr, who was absent due to illness, and second, her own unit’s.

      1) In Manar Badr’s presentation on Main Library Services, including Public Services, library changes because of the Revolution were reported:
The Egyptian People thought the BA was THEIR library.

Fridays became holidays.

The Library closed 28 Jan, and staff took 2 weeks off. Librarians returned to work 13 Feb. The Library reopened 22 Feb, with 1 less hour open daily, opening 9-4, instead of 11-7.

An Online Poetry Contest was advertised, and 75 poems were received.

The focus of interest was on the upcoming Egyptian referendum, legal issues, and parliamentary and presidential elections, leading to the Library Sector setting up a political education program.

A simulation of the referendum of 19 March was organized 2 days before the “real” referendum.

Instructional courses on legal awareness were offered.

In interactive workshop on the Culture of Dialogue was scheduled.

A script was written in colloquial Arabic for George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*, which was performed as a play 25 Sept.

2) Dalia Hamada’s presentation on the BA’s Special Libraries programs and activities:

- Children’s and Young People’s Libraries
  - A maquette of Tahrir Square was designed
  - An animated film about the revolution was created
  - A revolution song for children was composed
  - A play about the revolution was written and performed
  - A news collage from newspapers was created
  - Model of the Security Council
  - Youth Parliament was developed and held.
  - 1st winner in Peace Pals International Art Competition: YP Library user

- Taha Hussein Library for the Blind and Visually Impaired (TH)
  - White cane mobility training
  - UNESCO upgrade of the Taha Hussein Library
  - A total of 80 digital talking books in DAISY format have been produced
  - A Disability Corner was funded by the Islamic Development Bank

- Arts & Multimedia.
  - “Revolutions that changed the world” was a film program in 6/2011

D. Considerations in the New Egypt, e.g., Capturing the archive of the revolution. Refer to 13.F below.


Vice-Chairman Montesini deferred this item until Ambassador Ali Maher can participate, after Parliamentary or Presidential elections.

13. New Business

A. The IFBA now. Ways to strengthen it. How can IFBA Chapters help the BA after the Revolution?

Roundtable discussion, led by Vice Chairman Montesini. Refer to 13. D below.
A. Friends’ Poetry Reading: Theme – Poems on revolutionary and societal change from each delegation’s national literature for reading on Poetry Day, to be gifted to the BA (26 Oct)

Discussion of similar topic for 2012, Kerstin Signeul and Federico Wardal to plan event for 15th annual meeting. Former IFBA Poetry coordinator, Carmela Ruby, can also be consulted.

B. UN/UNDP Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the BA – D. Wardrop, L. Montesini, R. Amer


- Prof. Amer addressed Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women.

Members discussed, including S. Gamal on role of the Egyptian Association of University Women concentrating on raising awareness of legal rights of women and refuting religious misconceptions, Dr. S. Girard (UN – Commission on Status of Women conference which she attended).

- Vice Chairman Montesini addressed Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Several members commented: Australia is on the forefront of HIV education with gay people (Montesini), Egyptians die from HIV, and fail to acknowledge the issue (Khalafallah), what is the role in Alexandria of the Center for Women and Health?, An awareness program for the regional center for women and health in 2012.

C. IFBA Program for 2012 and the 10th Anniversary

In planning for 2012, we had a couple of brainstorming sessions with concepts as follows:

- Bring young people to help build a future Friends Assn. Youth – children of the world. Chairman Wardrop suggested young Egyptians through the EAFBA Youth Committee.
- Have cultural artifacts, products from their own cultures. Tables- art work from around the world. A cultural artifact exhibit with a youth component. An international exhibition of handicrafts of our countries.
- Chairman Wardrop – What the IFBA does. Vision, mission, goals, objectives – work on a brochure. (Scribe comment – What happened to the brochure in development??)
- Cosmopolitan legacy of Alexandria
- M. Wassef – Use AUC Press publications, to bring Egypt, Alex into our own countries.
- Chewikar Abdel Aziz – The gift of EAFBA to the BA for the 10th yr anniversary. A Sound & Light project. Location: BA Plaza. Project Alexander the Greek, the libraries burn, tale of 2 libraries, then the build of the new library. Opening date: October 16, 2012, a decade after the BA official opening.
- Long discussion of Sound & Light project in Alex: D. Wardrop, Dr. El-Awady, Al-Amir Mohsen, Dr. Khalafallah
- Climate – the environment as it pertains to Alexandria in 2050. Planning the future.
- Progress of science.
- A. Zaimis suggested a museum under the sea.
- Social activists – youth workshop
- Vice Chairman Montesini suggested the Egyptian revolution in comparison to the U.S. and French revolutions. Or comparative revolutions gleaning speakers from the foreign universities in Cairo
• Religion and Intellectualism (Noha)
• Religion and Ecology (S. Girard)
• Common topic – Revolution in Egypt with international/regional comparisons – e.g., U.S., Latin and Central American, French, Russian
• How revolutions have benefitted libraries. The impact of revolution on libraries. Freedom of thought.

An ad hoc committee was formed of volunteers: Lauren Bivona (NY), Federico de Wardal (Italy), Al-Amir Mohamed Mohsen (EAFBA), Aida Khalafallah (Minnesota), Maryem Darwiche (Chile), with the IFBA Ex. Board (Wardrop, Montesini, and Amer)

A group of volunteers formed an IFBA Youth Committee: Al-Amir Mohamed Mohsen, Sahar Gamal, Malak Wassef, and Lauren Bivona.

D. Friends Poetry Reading: What do the Friends want in the future?

   The Friends recommended for Swedish Friend Kerstin Signeul to fully assume coordinator role for next year, in collaboration with Federico de Wardal. Former poetry coordinator, Carmela Ruby, can also be a resource.

E. Other – Special presentations by BA Departments, which the IFBA requested.

   An in-depth presentation by Dr. Azza El-Kholy, Dep. Director, Center for Peace and Democracy, on “After the Revolution, New Directions for Peace Building in Egypt” was given, with Q and A following from the Friends who greatly appreciated the new directions in this program. Dr. El-Kholy opened with programs of the Center on a campaign against sexual harassment of women in Alexandria. Research revealed that harassers are victims with poor sex education. Courses in conflict resolution, international politics, gender and peace building, and research methods in social studies were summarized.

   A second presentation was made on “Impact of the Revolution on Dialogue Forum Programs” by Nazek El Wakeel, Head of Dialogue and Understanding Unit, Dialogue Forum.

   A final presentation, “Recording the Revolution for Future Generations; a New Challenge for the BA” was given by Sherihan Aref, Media Department. Focus was on documenting the 25th of January Revolution through the “Memory of Modern Egypt” with segments on martyrs of the Revolution, events, places, public figures, caricatures and funny items. For more information refer to http://modernegypt.bibalex.org

F. Chairman’s Concluding Remarks.

   The Chairman expressed deep appreciation for Mona El Nashar’s leadership and communication with the Friends community, to Heidi El Shafei, Nevine Konsowa and other office staff who help to coordinate the IFBA meetings, programs, and special tours with the Egyptian Friends, and communicate with us throughout the year.

Respectfully submitted,

Rosalie Cuneo Amer

IFBA Recorder/Scribe,

Chair, California Friends of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina


Corrections to the 2010 minutes, on 23/10/2011: Spelling of A. Zaimis throughout document, and retitling 6.C (p.2) content with Mr. James Edgar’s ppt presentation “Marketing Alexandria from an Excursion to a Destination City”. Changes to 11 C. from Manar Badr and Dalia Hamada, Summer/2012.

Note: The Floating Room in the BA is so named because it appears floating between the sea and sky.

Please note: All attachments were distributed in hard copy at the 15th Annual Meeting of International Friends.

Further note: H.E. A. Zaimis announced that the Greek Friends Award diploma was given to Gerald Grunberg, and is being sent to him in Paris.