

The BA Participates in a Cultural Exchange Project between Egypt and the United States of America

Alexandria— Dr. Sohair Wastawy, Head of BA Library Sector, announced the launch of the preparatory phase of “The Big Read” Project between Egypt and the United States of America. The project comprises a number of cultural activities from January to August 2009, including lectures, sessions, film screening, play readings, literary and artistic competitions as well as internet activities. Dr. Wastawy stated that the BA will launch its cultural “Big Read” Program on Saturday, 7 February 2009 with a march on the Corniche road.

The project is a collaborative Global Cultural Initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts, in partnership with Arts Midwest and the Institute of Museums and Library Services. It was a result of the National Endowment for the Arts Annual Report in 2004 that stated a great decline in the percentage of Americans reading for pleasure. The Initiative aimed at providing local organizations with a collection of books by eminent American writers and supporting them in holding a number of cultural events on a selected book.

Recently, two non-American books were added to the “Big Read” collection, namely *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* by the Russian author Leo Tolstoy and *Alless wal Kilab* (The Thief and the Dogs) by the Egyptian Author Naguib Mahfouz. Hence, they thought of exchanging reading between Americans and other nations as a global cultural initiative, and the project “The Big Read: Egypt/US” emerged. It aims at introducing Egyptian readers with American literature and introducing American readers with Egyptian literature. The Project is implemented by, in addition to the above mentioned American organizations, the US Department of State. The Egyptian partners are the American University in Cairo (AUC), the Egyptian Association for Educational Resources (E-ERA), and the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA).