



World Library and Information Congress: 70th IFLA General Conference and Council

22-27 August 2004
Buenos Aires, Argentina

Programme: <http://www.ifla.org/IV/ifla70/prog04.htm>

Code Number: 190-S
Meeting: 95. Plenary Session I.
Simultaneous Interpretation: Yes

Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Past, Present and Future

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November 15, 2004

So it's a great pleasure to welcome today Dr. Serageldin who is the Director of the Alexandrine Library. Dr. Serageldin has worked for many years past becoming director of the library of Alexandria and he worked for the World Bank, he has a doctorate from Harvard and Honoris doctorates from more universities than I can count and it's a great pleasure to have him here today to talk to us about his library, and I understand it's going to be a video presentation and it's something I look for very much to see this picture of the library that faces the sea and the places we see that look like the rising sun.

- Thank you professor, thank you colleagues for allowing me this opportunity to address you on the Great Library of Alexandria, past, present and future.all of the library of Alexandria.

Indeed, this is a visual presentation, and thus I would like to ask this lights, so that we have a better view, these lights, these lights, these are next to the screen.

Well there's much to cover so I have to go back to the ancient times where the inspiration comes.

And I would stem from there to the new library in operation, antiquities undertaken why it's much more than a library of the past that became to be a center of excellence. So every time you see one of those red lights you will know it's because we are getting closer to the end.

The ancient notion of library of course starts with Alexander the Great who had means of conquest and culture and created the greatest empire of this time

bringing together the cultures of the east and of the west. We tend to forget that he was much more than a conqueror because his personal tutor was Aristotle, Aristotle his personal tutor. What an amazing story! He died very young as you know. Ptolomy the First was entrusted with actually building Alexandria and it took part of Alexander's Empire after his death, that's the blue part that you see here on the map.

And the city of Alexandria which was built on a site selected by Alexander had a harbor, an island with a faro with light houses. There was a library with a museum, we'll talk about that later.

All travelers were surprised on the fact of the two marvels, the library and the faro, considered one of the seven marvels of the ancient world. And the library had a zoological garden, a botanical garden and many many scrolls and scholars of all over the world.

We don't know what the library looked like but this is a celebratory coin from the period and I would just call your attention to this column here because we'll be here in a moment.

Followers told Ptolomy I so that if he wanted the city could be the biggest in the world, so he invited and allowed them to do their things. They created the Temple to the Muses or the Museum, Museoin in Greek and in Latin that became a popular academy and a popular search center and it grew and blossomed under Ptolomy II Philadelphus who in many ways is the father of the library. They had scrolls, their books were scrolls and about 7 to 8 scrolls would be equal to 1 book of 300 octavo pages today. And since the library held about 700.000 scrolls it's about 100.000 - 120.000 books, quite substantial compared to medieval life's 1.000 volumes.

So these were the two things that most people visited when they came to Alexandria and in their visit there was the Temple to the Muses, the Museoin. Next to the harbor there was built an annex, the Daughter Library, the first annex which was later on to be the first to be burnt. The Daughter Library was burnt with the Temple of Serapis, on the other side of the town. This is Ptolomy I and the Serapeum and you know this is written in Greek and in hieroglyphics.

The Rosetta Stone, as Egyptians, we are very very grateful for the Rosetta for we know that if we would not have had the Rosetta stone, the world must have stopped all the marvels of ancient civilizations. This is the temple of Serapis.

So at the very least, the ancient library was not a single building but many glorious buildings that continue from glory to glory until the age of Cleopatra VII. During that time Calimachus the Great was actually the first to organize the library. He created the Pinakes that was a catalogue by subject and by author, alphabetically by author thereby becoming the father of library science. Aristarchus was the first to prove that the earth revolves around the sun, and that was 1800 years before Copernicus. And Apstemis was the first to prove that the earth was circular and calculated its circumference with enormous accuracy.

Hiparco calculated the length of the year to within 6 and a half minutes. And what do you think of the instruments that they had? They are still possible to this day.

They organized the calendar which Julio Cesar took as the basis of the Julian Calendar and of course the most demonstrative of all was Euclid's elements of geometry which is probably the only scientific text still being taught pretty much as it was for over years.

Archimedes is the great thinker also, he was a visiting scholar to the library and during his time he created Archimide's Screw which is still in use to these days in Egypt for raising water, and Herophilus was the first person to say that the brain controls the body and not the heart as Aristotle had claimed. And Manetho was the first chronicler of the Pharaohs and he organized them into the dynasties that we use to this today.

The Septuagint which is the first translation of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek was done in the ancient library. And this continued after some groups brought Christianity to Alexandria and some of the figures of the early church fathers came to Alexandria with Clement of Alexandria.

Girl's education in the ancient library. There's a witness from the over 200BC girl student at the Library of Alexandria. All of these disappeared but it lives in the minds of all people. So it comes the question, when was it destroyed? And contrary to good stories that certainly there are, it was not destroyed by the Arabs in 7th Century AD because it had long disappeared before, over centuries before that.

It was less glamorous than it seems to be. It was a big fight because it was destroyed in stages with three main events of destruction. Remember the three locations of the ancient library. The first disaster occurs in 48BC when young Cleopatra VII had herself thrown into a competence with the visiting Julius Caesar against Ptolomy, her brother. Julius Cesar won and in the process the whole, the select files, all the Egyptian harbor, all the ships in the harbor and in the process, the first library was destroyed and possibly 40 to 400000 scrolls.

Immediately after the death of Caesar, Mark Anthony takes over, as we all know, in love with Cleopatra he gave her 200.000 scrolls from Pergamon and these did arrive to Alexandria, and in fact were lost in that first part. Upon the death of Mark Anthony, Cleopatra commits suicide and of course Augustus Octavian places Egypt under Roman control and the importance of the library becomes less than it was because the importance of Egypt itself was less. Later on St. Mark brings in Christianity to Alexandria and the Christians of Egypt are subjected to enormous persecution by the Romans. I'll just tell you that the Calendar in Egypt does not match the Catholic Calendar.

Another interesting lady comes in, Queen Zenobia of Palmyra. She actually did conquer Alexandria in 269/270 but lost it back to the Romans and it is in that

battle that the second major disaster occurs because all historians agree that the entire world, including the Museum (Museion) original building was destroyed. And thus somewhere in 200-300 the second disappearance occurs and all that's left goes after the Daughter Library in the Serapeum.

Now with Constantine the Great he embraces Christianity, and move the capital right to Constantinople. He did forbid other religions. In 391AD Emperor Theodosius past a decree and a decree of Theodosius forbid all other bigger religions and Patriarch Theophilus then burnt the remnants of the Serapeum. This is a manuscript from the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna which shows Bishop Theophilus standing over the Serapeum.

What remained then towards the end of the Library, as a Library, what remained were manuscripts in the hands of the scholars for another generation.

And we come to an important figure, Hypatia, the first science first woman in astronomy, mathematics, philosopher, brilliant orator, daughter of Theon, last recorded scholar of Alexandria. Her flesh and her bones were spread in a fight in 415 AD and that is of course the end of the Alexandrian scholarships and that is more than 266 years before the entry of the Arabs. So it was a sad story but what is important to know is that it is a slow decline and neglect as from year 460, so it was not a single big fire that destroyed the ancient library.

It gave us a lot of inspiration to these days, among other things the museum, so we have dreams for tomorrow and fragments from the past.

If we visit Alexandria today we'll see some of those fragments of that age.

But this is a medieval period.

But look at the waters where there was the library, there stand the elements of rich Alexandria. And look at this column. Doesn't that look like the one I showed you in the coin?

It could very much be one of those columns of the ancient library that is now in the water.

We picked up some of the great elements. This is the colossus of the statue of Ptolomy which now stands at the door of the New Library.

So the new library has been an attempt to recapture the spirit of the past which inspires us so much and for which we set four goals.

The first is this, to be

- * The window on Egypt for the world and the region
- * Window on the world for Egypt and the region
- * A leading institution that meets the challenge of the digital age, because we are in the third millenium, and above all
- * A vibrant Center of Intellectual Debate, a space of freedom for dialogue between individuals and civilizations.

And that is why the library is much more than a library. Thus we have a library that could accommodate

- a library for 4-8million books
- a center for internet connectivity
- a conference center with 3000 seats
- planetarium
- three museums

- seven research institutes, 6 art galleries and a lot

Legally we are a new entity that I think has no parallel in the world. We created a special law which tends out to be Law Number 1 for 2001. First law third millenium which basically takes us outside of the government. Attaches us to the head of state as the highest example, highest simple, of national thought.

And the president who is giving a free hand on that law created Decree 76 with a Council of Patrons among others with the Queen of Spain, President of France, Jimmy Carter, Boutrus-Gali.

And a Board of Trustees that has really all the powers.

And this Board of Trustees has all the authority including the appointment of Director and it has all the important people in Egypt on ex-officio basis. The Ministers of Higher Education, Scientific Research, Culture, Foreign Affairs, the Governor of Alexandria, President of the University, up to 25 eminent persons.

No other institution of international law, turns over the whole authority of the institution to a group that is two third non-nationals.

But that is to emphasize the notion that the library stood to international condition.

This is the building. It was built by a group of very young designers from Norway who worked with an Egyptian engineer and it was based on a competition organized by UNESCO, and the building, this is the new building, it's the rising sun, as my colleague said. We have a ..., this is the planetarium here, and our conference center was preexistent, and it was just incorporated to the design. These are the universities, this is the campus of the university, literally 20 meters away with 70000 students there.

This is the Great Hall of the Library. I hope you come in and visit us some time.

There is natural, soft natural light almost everywhere and inside floating seminar rooms where meetings can be held. We invite IFLA to hold its meetings there in the future.

This is the conference facility, these are naked auditoriums. I hope the day you come, you'll use it. We have break up halls such as these. These are secondary halls. We have break up rooms for 8 people to 120 people, more meeting rooms, and we have organized 560 events in this observatories in the last year and a half.

The Planetarium like the plaza are quite easy to be eyed whether by day or by night.

The importance of the event, which people recognize the quality of its inauguration, saw 5 presidents, 2 queens, 3 prime ministers and many ministers of culture attended. Eminent people like Sinead O'Connor donated books and others related to thoughts for freedom attended. And we had a wonderful event with children coming in from all over. And the children themselves for this distinguished audience came and joined with orchestras from all over from Argentina, from United States from India, from Europe and the children of Egypt sung in Arabic.

Some of the visitors, the Queen of Spain and the Queen of Jordan.

This is the library which I hope you'll find visiting. We have many, many activities from book fairs to seminars to formal meetings, scientific seminars, small discussion groups, we lodge a series of activities involving people from around the world. But perhaps what's more important is that's just not a place for an elite. We have many, many visitors come every day. In fact we have over 750.000 visitors every year, last year and lots of children, we specially welcome children.

This vast complex we present you today is about the library

- *Specialized libraries
- * internet archive
- * research institutes
- * museums
- * planetarium
- * art galleries

and it is very much a hybrid library.

We know that we build up the collection of 100.000 new books a year. We started at about 200.000 and we have 330.000 books available mostly on open access rows. But they rely on this notion of having electronic resources. This is the Great Room we use and yes, of course, people include as an enormous amount of computer equipment available for everybody.

There are over a thousand computers deployed in and it's an open access system.

The specialized libraries include:

- * Taha Hussain Library for the blind and visually impaired
- * Children's Library with diverse materials
- * Young People's Library , which also has mostly on-line tutors,
- * Multimedia Library
- * Rare Books Library

and we have an Internet Archive which is based on the assumption of the mere nature of Internet research. A world wide web page passport, about 100 terabytes. The inventor of the Internet Archive basically donated this first replica of the archive which enables us to maintain a record of all that is there in photographs every two months on the Internet itself.

There are three museums.

* Manuscripts Museum. Where we keep some 6700 manuscripts comprising over 10.000 titles.

* Antiquities Museum which covers all of Egypt's history. It's taken from all the museums of Egypt.

* Science Museum which is done in collaboration with France which is didactic with the intention that there are no pieces or valuable pieces that we cannot teach to the youngsters.

And of course the Planetarium where we are taking on adventures and we are now planning with our colleagues to build this new center.

This place of exhibitions. This is the Award Collection Permanent Display or Shady Abdel Salam Exhibition from France.

The Treasures of the Earth or Manuscripts from Italy or the Art of Lennart Nilsson from Scandinavia, all these exhibitions keep the place very much alive and almost needing something different.

Now if you look at the Seven Institutes and A Forum we have created:

- * the Manuscript Institute does the demonstration and exhibition of manuscripts including the use of digital technology for representing them, we also have a
- * Center for Calligraphy and Writing, and there what we want is to understand all the letters of the world, appreciation of Arabic calligraphy and of course, we see the tradition of the Rosetta Stone, that the scripts are very important for

different libraries, certainly for the Library of Alexandria it's very important. We have impressed all scripts of the world in the library and we also have special programs that we put in hieroglyphics and Arabic.

* A Center for Special Studies in Science. It's a Virtual Network for Excellence whose final function is to meet researchers, Egyptian researchers with researchers from the world. And the first generation of that is being done. We have 320 applications. And 25 fellowships to work, to collaborate with the Library of Alexandria so that the best of science can be brought to the Center.

* We are at the Egyptian Center for Documentation of the Natural and Cultural Heritage. It's just called CULNAT. It's one of the seven centers located in Cairo. There's its building there and there's where we document the cultural heritage, the natural heritage and the non-material heritage.

And in the tangible and intangible, in the tangible cultural heritage, we've created an archeological map of Egypt and architectural heritage of Cairo. This is the archeological map of Egypt to which you can gain access by going straight to a particular site and there you can see the site if you want. And you can select a sublocation. This is a particular tomb where it stands all its plant. Navigate into the tomb enter on this wall. Then to the descriptions of the wall and then on this part there's the translation in English. It's a big job and my colleagues who worked on that asked how long it takes until all is done and Dr Patris said to them about 150 years!!!

At the Architectural Heritage of Cairo, the monuments of Central Cairo and you can access them either by individual monument or you can access them by street or by individual architect.

And we've done the linking for natural heritage. These are the heritage conservation sites. And these are visions for plants and for birds.

And we look also at the Intangible Cultural Heritage, where we've recorded Arabic music for national database that is being reproduced with authors.

And also a Photographic Memory of Egypt, all photographed. There is a very big archive of these photographs.

And also Documentation of Folklore. Of course, you'll see him if you are ever in Egypt. He's the Head of the National Library of Egypt, but more important he's the most leading expert on Egyptian folklore. I'm very proud.

So all of these techniques are to bring the past to life and we have to bring into the future technologies and that is ISIS which means International School for Information Sciences. It is dealing new projects, dealing the pioneering of new projects, each of them is done in partnership with powerful, imaginative proven partners. I'll show you very quickly seven of these projects we are now doing:

* The Internet Archive, we spoke about on the general idea that I've shared. If we could share this image in an archive in California and in Alexandria, also one in Europe and one in Asia, at the four sites, should there ever be a natural or political disaster, that part of the memory of humanity shall be safeguarded for all times.

* The Million Book Project is a very ambitious enterprise whose goals are to capture all books in digital format.

And the short term goal is to digitize 1 million books (which is less than 1% of all books in all languages ever published) by 2007 and also to provide a test-bed to support research areas such as:

- scanning techniques
- optical character recognition (OCR)
- intelligent indexing
- machine translation and
- information retrieval

The fact is that there are other new projects and new on machine translation which I'll present right now

These are our partners:

Carnegie Mellon University, US

Internet Archives, US

China and India

and the Process of selection of books with due Identification of Book

Meta data

and then Scanning process

Image Processing

and Quality Control

OCR and then

Publishing

And these are some of the machines we are using, scanners we are using.

The special scanners for very valuable types of old books and special scanners for other and color techniques.

Image Processing is where we have some problems, because it normally removes the noise and reduces file size and among other things it despeckles (removes isolated black pixels) and deskews (detects and removes the skew). Despeckles by removing absolutely black pixels and deskews by removing extra white spaces, curvature correction and removal of margins, etc.

We have been doing this quite successfully in Latin using Abbyy FineReader or OmniPage. These results are 90% correct, no output correction is planned.

For Arabic poses unique challenges, Sakhr Automatic reader is the one we are using for different collections and output corrections and it's very tricky with old books. And part of it that can be seen, this is the correction on the page as we read. Latin was OK.

But in Arabic, you'll see, we have a lot of dots that are intended to be part of the process and not part of the despeckle.

So finding which dots are specks and which dots must be retained for the meaning is a tricky problem on which we work right now.

We have challenges in publishing which I resume in:

- * Easy browsing of books
- * Accommodate low bandwidth use, in some way, and
- * Preserve the original layout of books where it takes images, so it's not actually just transform, the image actually must be retained

- * Provide powerful search engine for both the content and the metadata
 - * Support image-on-text format
 - * Support Arabic language
- is our own contribution to the project.

And we come to Formats of the

- * DJVU and PDF.

PDF

- does not support image-on-text yet
- does not support Arabic Language yet
- and has large file size and

DJVU

- is less well know than PDF, but it does
- support high compression and
- image-on-text format

The Arabic Digital Library will be a byproduct of that effort and we are doing so far in the last few months. We now reach about, a little under 11000 or 10500 of books that have been digitized. Most of them, all the books are copyrighted. But what we are worried about them now is to see that the process is going in an effective way. And we focus specifically on the:

- * Digital Library of History of Egypt

To build an integrated digital library of the modern history of Egypt starting in the last 200 years. For that we:

- scan,
- catalog,
- index ,
- OCR,
- present it in a searchable form to its users

Now other project that we have is also

- * The Development Gateway of the World Bank to bring on-line data in usable format of Arabic for our users

We are also planning :

- * Distance Learning with the Best, and we started from one of our founding members. You say, wouldn't it be great to come to the Library and not just find the writings of Albert Einstein but actually be able to get the lectures, the sound, the voices, and so on wouldn't it be wonderful to go to libraries and get that? And of course we've started right now by those who are living, who are going to give us the rights to their image, their voice and their lectures as well, we have started by that and we have several things to do.

For example:

- * IPR arrangements and I think
- *our students would benefit enormously from actually bringing the lectures instead of reading the text.

In my part of the world we have a major problem with science institutions and so we want to have the teachers of science, the researchers and the students to view amazing scientific progress and to rely upon powerpoint presentations such as the Supercourse. The first Supercourse with 1000 lectures most on technology was launched.

We also digit out the children and this is a program from My Book: Digital and Printed. And children go and select from a computer some material, they print it, they bind it and they have it at home, carry home the little book that they've made, they can take it and keep it, but before they are allowed to take the book away we put it on a scanner and see what they've created, the book that they hold in their hands so precious, what it was before. We close the game in that way.

* We thank donations for the Book Mobile. We take it to schools and disadvantaged neighborhoods to create the link with the printed material and electronic material.

* But perhaps the most ambitious of all in the world is an experiment that belongs to India. "Self-Learning and Instruction". Allows poor children, disadvantaged children who have never seen a computer before, to actually access to Internet and so to learning. These are the actual pictures from India and this is the hole in the wall that you see there, it has the form of the mouse that they use and these children learn all by themselves without any adult intervention and small monitors and cameras to test the experiment, and it worked quite well.

The second part is that equipment such as this will be made work outdoors, help keep it in working conditions in any external environment. In India they took it to the shore lands, to the slums.

This is the equipment of narrow testing and it's fascinating to see how the children learn by themselves. I see the program. And when they have the little sign, the timer coming up, they don't know what the timer is so they call it the little drum. But they say this means you have to wait till the little drum goes away, so they have the concept, that's what's important.

So these are the kinds of things that we're doing.

We're not ignoring the art side.

* There's an orchestra to bring the best international efforts to the Library. We have many exhibitions

* Our history is being promoted with the Alexandria-Med Center which not only looks at Historical Alexandria or Medieval Alexandria but also to Modern Alexandria.

* Last but not least we speak of the "Dialogue Forum". Where we mobilize Egypt's Intellectual Boards, Advisory Committees but above all something we may have heard. They actually launched a major reform, the initiative for the Whole Arab World, which was very well received by the G8 when we invited a group of Intellectuals who launched the Arab Reform Forum, and they created the Alexandria Declaration. We can take it directly from other web sites, you can see the actual Declaration and the response of the Arab World.

The Institutes and the Forum A is just the beginning. It is a beginning of creating new rights with only 18 months old, a time horizon for many of these initiatives is 3 to 5 years.

Our conclusion however is that the challenge for libraries is big, for us in the developing world, we are trying to create a Global Center of Excellence and Centers of Excellence are required in every country.

People ask me why should we spend our limited funds on this facility when the whole national system still needs so much?

To which my answer is that the difference between a human being and a chimpanzee is less than 2% of DNA and yet that 2% of DNA has created all our technology, all our poetry, all our philosophy, all our architecture, all our history and this is what makes us human. In the same sense Centers of Excellence are to a country's national system as that special 2% of DNA is to the human genome. It makes all the difference between a nation's ability to interact with the greatest science of the world. In forum, imagination and ability are everything. Investments in there would be pennies compared to the outturn you could get on such investments in the future. And according to their daring to dream, daring to be bold and why not adopt, specially as librarians, the notion of universal access to all knowledge for all people at all times sure that there can't be nothing more democratic, more helpful to the highest inspirations of human mind than that.

I believe therefore that the digital libraries of the future are the future of the developing world. We will never be able to build libraries one book at a time, that would be past. We should benefit with all the more previous of the planet.

What we need to do is honor the past, celebrate the present and embrace the future. It is indeed the Dawn of a new Age! And we should embrace it! And by that I mean we should face up the worries we are worried about and face them.

- * We need to harness digital technologies, specially science and technology for the developing countries,
- * and major efforts to improve, either provide adequate infrastructure and trained technical personnel
- * but we also need to reduce the cost of connectivity for institutions and individuals,
- * Hubs make sure that cost of high bandwidth connectivity is significantly reduced.

To me at the Library of Alexandria, the cost of 155 megabits connectivity is equal to paying the salaries of 400 university grants every month, now I ask you: is that a sensible way to share information around the planet?

We need to organize major hubs in the developing world to

- * share digital information with OECD research institutions
- * facilitate access to some materials (in video format, for example) and
- * to provide that as original materials.
- * Libraries should maintain electronic gateways for the sharing of digital information among researchers, teachers and learners and, I believe
- * Inter-library loans in electronic form should be encouraged
- * Digital copies of back issues of journals should be made available as quickly as possible
- * we need to select articles that can be posted and scientific committees should help in that
- * and we should build a digital-format-basic-science library of some 200.000-400.000 items, which should be made available free on-line.

Now if we want rationality and the scientific outlook which they root, rather than fanaticism and xenophobia and all of such tendencies, the scientific, engineering and medical literature should be made available.

* Adequate data-bases should be made available either for free or for token fees with appropriate barriers to access.

Special Services

- * Print on demand
- * Expansion of special outreach for schools and deprived children and
- * special services for the visually impaired.

I think this will require rethinking of some of the IPR and copyright issues but we need to think together with the authors and the publishers on how to do it

Imagination

- * There are various ways to ease fears of excess copying, from using the established conventions to self-limiting or time-bound software, should be explored.
- * We need to create new ways of searching
- * links from museum pieces to art galleries to conventional library items
- * to create coherent domains of knowledge and so much more.

Now, all the parts of these conditions are essential. I'm sure many of the Committees of IFLA will be looking at its different aspects but they reinforce each other and the whole is much more than the sum of the parts. And thus, we in the developing world need your help. It's working together that we will be able to overcome the obstacles.

We, for our part, intend to do our part, and the New Biblioteca Alexandrina is well on its way to fulfil its function as

- * A window on Egypt for the world,
- * A window on the world for Egypt
- * A challenge of the digital age and,
- * A Vibrant Center of Intellectual Debate.

We are guided in our this philosophy by these wise words of Mahatma Gandhi who said:

"I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any."

Thus with a new generation that overcome hate and suspicion is that we will create that world, and I thank you very much your attention.

For questions I must say we have 15 minutes and there must be many, many questions on the impressive library. Please raise your hands.

- One of the things I would like to ask you is how you are selecting your books in such a large, one of the centers of the world, I mean printing and digitization.

I think at this stage, it is very opportunistic. I don't know about the other partners how they are selecting Chinese books, the Indian books and the English language books, but in the Library of Alexandria we started with books that are currently out of copyright, books with whom we have agreed to the publishers as with regards to catalogues and books that are handed, that's where we started with. There's a lot more to be done but we haven't got around yet to the stage,

we are not able to confront the issues, particular issues of copyright and arrangements on how the material could be used once its there.

- You said all libraries access..., how do you organize, do you use a classification team, how do the people find their way?

Yes, the... of course, classifications; at present we have reference desks at every level. The library is organized in seven levels. The bottom level is what we call the roots of knowledge which are history, geography, philosophy, religion, and then the next level up would be literature, later on after that would be arts, and plastic arts and painting and culture in general and then references on social sciences, natural sciences and technology. On each level there is a reference librarian and the material is available for complete access on the shelves.

At present we have a strategy to build up a collection based or focusing first on the Ancient Library, then on the city of Alexandria and then on Egypt and that would help us fulfil, let's say, the first objective to be the world leader on Egypt. Secondly we want to have a well balanced coverage for public library type of function for Egypt itself, its window for the world.

The third part is that we are trying to find some specialized niches where we can make a contribution and two of these are the ethics of science and technology and the issue of working in development. So these are some of the aspects.

- I was wondering what other nations, what other groups, partners have contributed?

We've had wonderful gifts from many nations, among our international partners in terms of books, France stands as number one, Italy and Greece come after that. We have had donations, of course monetary donations from countries including the Arab Countries that were the biggest donors to this project. They donated 65 millions out of 110 millions in total donations for the construction of the library to which Egypt added more than 25 millions of its own money for the construction of the project, and France has helped us a lot in for example the Science Museum and we're working together in other areas as well.

I think beyond to be more the initiatives of individual institutions, particular libraries and associations of friends from Australia to North America, Europe to Africa and Asia, we have many many certified associations of friends that are extremely helpful. The British Group of friends donated a complete replica of all the Arabic manuscripts in the British Library. It is an enormous gift of which we are deeply grateful.

- You've mentioned the issue of taking resources to this library as supposed to be the infrastructure in Egypt, and I just wonder if there are formal mechanisms you have for cooperating with other university and public libraries in the country and, on the contrary, is it possible to work on their own regarding the possession of material and virtual libraries?

We have in Egypt something called the National Network of Libraries which is supposed to share resources and we are members of that. But ultimately and hoping for quite an interesting and very controversial idea we hope to apply to international libraries into the Library of Alexandria what would be extraterritoriality. To give a computer terminal or two or a group to another great library in another great nation and say this really belongs to you so the person would be able to do everything as actually visiting your Library in Paris or London or Washington and so on. Just as with extraterritoriality, the land of an embassy has been the land of a foreign country, in the same way this is

completely yours and up to you now in the same way. I'm hoping that the Library of Alexandria will have knowledge implants in other libraries in Egypt to facilitate the issues of cooperation and so on ...that is part of the idea that we should be thinking about.

- I'm Egyptian and I'm very very much proud for your presentation. Since I'm living two hours away from Biblioteca Alexandrina but I came here thousands of miles away to know the answers, my question is basically about a new international school of library science, will you please tell us about the political aspects about it?

Well, as regards the international school for information sciences, at one point people wanted it just to be a regular library school, plain librarians, but I personally felt, and the Board of Trustees agreed, that it should be much more an incubator of the new. An incubator of new projects that bring on-line, in production sense, the best new ideas, and I'll show your six or seven of these ideas, they are about 25 but they are under study now. And as we resolve the problems, then it actually becomes a service that the library can offer until we resolve all the problems, including problems of OCR, text on image and other things that I've mentioned. It will take some time before it becomes available for everybody and it is in that spirit that the ISIS, which is also the acronym words of the Goddess of Wisdom in Ancient Egypt, ISIS is really an in-house think-tank to incubate new approaches that will help make Biblioteca Alexandrina a true hub for the best in library science around the world.

Next Question.

- Well, I'm sure many of us are excited to see the library and wondering if it is the better place for next IFLA meeting.

Yes, we do we hope you are all with us at the next IFLA meeting. I'll make sure to present our invitation.

As you saw the size of our large auditorium, I think we can easily accommodate two and a half times the size of this audience.

Next question. In that case we thank you for your impressive presentation and I look forward to the IFLA Conference at the Biblioteca Alexandrina.