"Research For All" at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina

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Abstract:

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina has taken the initiative of

Promoting Reading and Research

in its library program from age 6 in the Children Library to age 12 in the Young People Library and beyond in the Main Library. By applying:

I- The Egyptian Experience:

Following the footsteps of Egypt's first lady Mrs. Mubarak and her initiative 12 years ago in promoting reading through her program entitled "Reading For All" (born early 90's) which is now an important tool used all over Egypt for achieving educational & cultural development.

II- The Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) Experience

The BA is now undertaking the initiative to promote research as it did for reading;
by adopting
(1)'Research for all' program also from age 6 in the Children Library all the way to the Young People Library and Main Library, hoping to achieve a more assertive generation, well informed and good decision makers.

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(2) 'Education through Libraries and Museums'
Users of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina have the privilege to get knowledge from books, museums, exhibitions & conferences. Getting information from all these sources qualifies them to be members of this Center of Excellence.

Since reading is the basic tool of acquiring knowledge and the basis of any scientific, cultural or intellectual effort, we find that the program 'Reading For All' is helping the Bibliotheca Alexandrina in alerting users that the book is the main source of knowledge, which entitles people to "the right to Investigate, Imagine and Invent" the future.

The 21st Century being the century of Knowledge & Information, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina has undertaken the following program to compliment the 'Reading For All ' Program…which is

The Research For All:
Through this program the BA Librarians will dedicate their time to select topics of research of general interest and adequate to curriculum of study, in order to encourage young users to learn how to do research.

Through this program, they will learn:

- How to look for information; in a periodical, a reference book, a book and e-resources.

- How to collect information and refer to main sources used.

- How to present this information; both in print & non-print form.

The BA hope is to guide users and encourage them to work in teams, to assist one another, to address groups, to become more analytical, to conduct comparative studies and learn more about the world around them.

'Education through Libraries and Museums at the BA'
Members joining the Libraries of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina can consult books, selected e-Resources, attend conferences, concerts and visit exhibitions & museums to add to their knowledge and become better informed individuals.

" Research For All "
at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA), a 'state-of-the-arts' project of the 21st century, has just opened its doors for the public on the 20th of October 2002, after an inaugural ceremony attended by Kings, Queens, Heads of States and other dignitaries.

The Library of Alexandria, which has started with the fame of the ancient library, has helped put Alexandria on the touristic map of Egypt; since then, the library has received almost ½ a million national & international visitors and over 10,000 active library members.

Known for its beautiful design, it is now a landmark in Alexandria and has won many awards for its fine architecture. Viewing the building from the outside is one thing, until you enter the library building and approach the Callimachus triangle (Callimachus, the great Hellenistic poet, who created the first organized classification system by subject and author) this triangle serves as the observatory, from which you can observe the grandeur of this elegant library. There, one gets overwhelmed by the great space of the main reading room *spectacular, soaring, elegant, out of this world*, are some of the expressions you might express when you reach this point.

The main reading room can seat 2000 users, at the reading tables, 200 in study rooms, and is equipped with almost 500 PCs, spread over 7 levels and in the specialized libraries.

The manner, this Library is to be managed, was described by a Presidential Decree stipulating that it is a public juridical person headquartered in Alexandria and attached to the President; and that it shall be managed by:
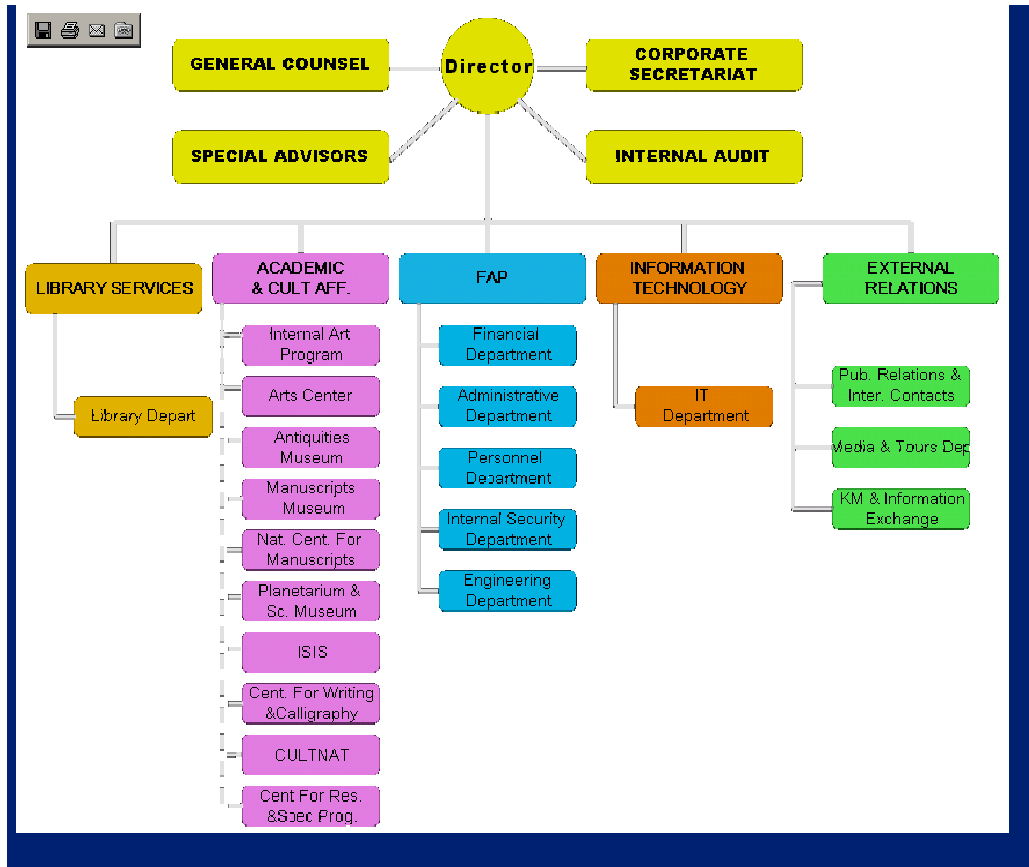
(a) *The Council of Patrons*
Composed of a number of prominent persons from different parts of the world, not less than eight and no more than twenty-four, to be chosen by invitation of the President of the Republic of Egypt and one of these persons shall be the Director-General of the UNESCO.
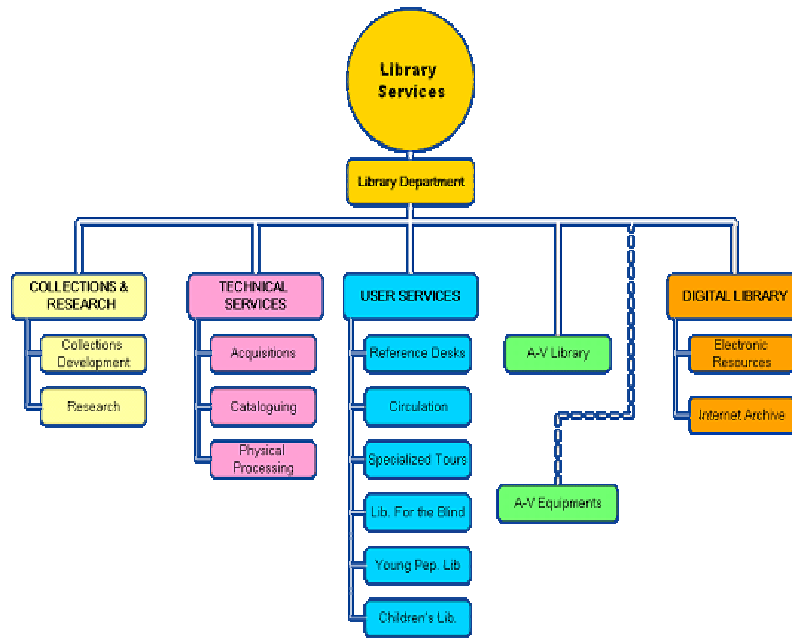
(b) *The Board of Trustees*
Composed of a number of eminent persons of scientific (intellectual) standing or international experience, among Egyptians and Non-Egyptians, not less than fifteen and no more than thirty. The Board of Trustees is the decision-making power on matters of the Library, and will be responsible for defining its general policies, for the administration and planning of its activities, and establishment of its administrative and financial regulations.

(c) *The Director-General*
Appointed by the Board of Trustees is the Chief Executive Officer of the Library, and is entrusted with the execution of the policies established by the Board.

Let me now describe how the Library Sector is divided and the different services handled in this sector.

The real goal of this library is:

> *To honor the past,*
> *To celebrate the present and*
> *To invent the future.*

To do so, it will undertake a unique role by being the window of the world on Egypt, the window of Egypt on the world, by being a library for the new digital age and a center of learning and dialogue.

The library consists of:

- The Main Library (over 18)

- The Multimedia Library

- Taha Hussein Library (for the blind & visually impaired)

- The Young People Library (12-18)

- The Children Library (6-12)

The Main Library is designed to serve the public and the researchers over 18 years of age, with open shelves and closed access areas.

Its capacity at term can reach 5 to 8 million volumes, the major quantity to be shelved in closed access areas. The open shelves capacity can exceed half a million and we now have just over 300,000.

Our vision for the new Library is to recapture the spirit of the ancient one. Not so much to collect all the books of the planet, but to be a space of freedom, where dialog can take place.

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina is working to ensure the challenge of the new digital revolution by establishing partnerships with the very best institutions. The first backup of the Internet Archive is in the BA, increasing the Library resources tremendously. The Library is also a major instrument for promoting new ways of collaborating with international agencies and educational institution; example the Supercourse which is accessible through the BA web page, where you can access over 1000 lectures in Epidemiology and Preventative Medicine, free from copyrights and can be used to accentuate and improve methods of science teaching and education. Any new topic is added instantly through the Golden Lecture program and is translated into many languages for the benefit of humankind. The BA is also involved as a center of Dialog in many topics through international conferences: Biotechnology, Ethics of Science, Heritage….

In the Main Library, the collections are distributed with the concept of:

A Pyramid of Knowledge

… to the new technologies

	003 –006 Computer Science **384 Communications**	**F2**
	500 Science **600 Technology (except 650)**	**F1**
	300 Social Sciences **(except 310, 330, 340, 380)**	**E**
	000 Generalities (except 003-006) **310 General Statistics** **330 Economics** **340 Law** **380 Commerce, Transportations,** **Communications (except 384),** **650 Management**	**B1**
	700 Arts & Culture **(except 778, 780, 791, 792)**	**B2**
	800 Literature **400 Language**	**B3**
	900 History & Geography **200 Religions** **100 Philosophy**	**B4**

From the roots of knowledge …

Over and above this collection we also have special collections:

- Manuscripts & Rare Books

- Microfilms

- Nobel Collection for 100 years of Literature, from 1901 – 2001

- Shadi Abdel Salam, personal collection, an Egyptian artist and cinema producer

- BA publications covering conferences, arts, exhibitions and other topics

The Multimedia Library

The Multimedia Library includes a collection of print & non-print resources.
Print: periodicals, references and books on theater, performing arts, cinema, photography and music.
Non-Print: CD/DVD, audiocassettes, videos, records, slides, photos & other covering all subjects.

Users will be able to access all multimedia resources through the bibliographic records on the Bibliotheca Alexandrina catalog referred to by the OPAC (=On-Line Public Access Catalog), and eventually using special multimedia software, they will be able to access and play digital multimedia material.

Meanwhile, members can use the resources of this library by attending pre-scheduled shows selected from the collection, or by asking the help of the information specialists at the Information desk to use the different types of media.

This multimedia library will allow users to practice self-teaching and distant learning using different tools and web resources.

They can also access 1000 motion pictures through the Internet Archive. The Internet Moving Images Archive is now online and available for your use.
We hope that easy access to a diverse collection of copyright and restriction-free content will encourage more people to be movie creators in their own right.

Taha Hussein Library

The Taha Hussein Library is a new concept, which will open new horizons for the blind and the visually impaired by enabling them to access all the resources of the library as well as selected web resources.

The library is equipped with special software, which will allow the blind and the visually impaired to access the OPAC (=Online Public Access Cataloging), using Braille software and sound software, to know what is available in the library.

The blind will also be able to access all the electronic resources available through the BA website, using the same software. They will also be able to read printed materials by scanning.

Let me now introduce Egypt's national program for promoting reading from childhood and the efforts to turn this project into a program adopted by major institutions dealing with Children & Young Adults

To introduce other Libraries like the Children Library and the Young People Library of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, I need to introduce first 3 major programs adopted by these Libraries:

(1) The first one is a National program adopted by many libraries in Egypt as well as the Bibliotheca Alexandrina**: The 'Reading For All' project**.

It started in the early 1990s motivated by a new century, which was about to begin, a new era of scientific and technological leaps, a freedom to reach new realms of infinite knowledge and where happiness and progress should prevail.

Mrs. Suzanne Mubarak, the sponsor of this great project, was inspired by the fact that Egypt is a nation with a great history and this history should positively influence generations to come.

Since, the 21st century was designated to be the century of knowledge and information. *And the key to knowledge is reading*. Other necessities of the new era also include the computer, the Internet and opening up to the global village.

At first, we worked with existing school libraries and built new public libraries; these libraries grew into centers of enlightenment, knowledge, wonder and pleasure and places where people could enjoy the creative expansions of the imagination and the vast world of knowledge.

According to a specific strategy, the Integrated Care Society (ICS) chaired by Suzanne Mubarak launched the project. This strategy was based on a belief in the value of reading for educating new generations, and in the right of every adult or child in Egypt to have access to reading.

This clear vision was the basis of a national reading campaign. Culture is widely believed to be the best investment in the course of building new societies for the future. For Egypt, it is as it was reiterated by the Minister of Culture of Norway at an event held at the BA, "Cultures keep Nations Alive".

Anticipating the new century, the national "Reading For All" campaign soon developed into the "Reading for All" Project. It celebrated the value and pleasure of learning.

In addition to thousands of libraries being opened to the public in the summer, the publishing movement also flourished in the project's fourth year, a Family Library scheme was introduced to print millions of copies of important titles by leading authors in the fields of art, literature, the history of ideas, science and religion, including encyclopedic works that shaped the minds of the Arab world's renaissance. More subsidiaries were added, such as the Green Corner and the Twenty First Century Club to teach the children about environment, computers, the Internet and Multimedia; where 1000's of children learnt how to use computers and explore the world of technology, receiving Awards of the Best Children Software.

Within years, the project developed into a national program, this program has been commended by international organizations, particularly UNESCO, who asked for the transfer of this model to other national environments. Egypt's national experience has thus had universal ramifications and became a leading component of voluntary cultural work in modern Egypt.

- To help both children and adults develop the habit of reading for acquiring more creative and intellectual abilities, and deepening their sense of national belonging;

- To improve and establish links between children's literature and the Internet; to help Egyptian authors in this respect so that their work never lags behind international standards; and to provide enough information on children's book in other countries.

This has been proven by the translation movement on children books in many countries and the nomination of authors of children Literature to National & International Awards.

Libraries proved to be the best way to encourage children to read, as the number of libraries increased, technical assistance by the ICS, the Integrated Care Society became necessary. Librarians were trained on appropriate indexing and classification methods and using different colors for the sake of accessibility to children. They were also trained to organize various activities for the children. They were shown how to engage children's attention and encourage them to read as a pleasure rather than a chore.

The ICS realized that reading was the key to learning and one of the main keys to knowledge at large. The right books were chosen for the purpose of expanding children's knowledge and for preparing them to play expected social roles in the future.

Reading has long been essential for the edification of individuals. Nowadays, it is also essential for the social and economic growth and development of the countries of the world. It is a habit that may be cultivated from the early years of childhood. Subject to environmental influences related to the family, school and society at large. One of the basic skills acquired by individuals, which can create more pleasure and more access to various sources of knowledge.

Summing up the objectives of the 'Reading For All' program, which are:

- To provide books and other material that meet personal and curricular needs.

- To guide pupils in the choice of books.

- To help pupils build a wide range of relevant interests, organizing book discussions and other activities that reinforce their reading habits.

- To elaborate the concept of life-long learning through the sustained use of library resources.

- To help pupils develop an aesthetic sense for the appreciation of and interest in the arts.

- Through regular reading, children fulfill existing interests and may probably develop new ones, they will discover that knowledge is not confined to textbooks and that there are other sources of additional information. They will thus develop the necessary skills to select and evaluate information obtained from different sources.

Let us make Reading For All our motto. Let us work for making the necessary knowledge accessible to the new generations. Let us hope that this will enable them to build a society in which all members – children and adults, rich and poor – may live happily. Let us hope it will be a society of togetherness and equity, knowledge and enlightenment, instructive education and high culture**.**

It is Egypt's gateway into the twenty first century.

The 21st century being the century of Knowledge and Information and since the key to Knowledge is Reading, than the key to Information is Research.

As knowledge and Information go hand in hand, Reading & Research complement each other and together pave the road to progress and excellence.

Let me elaborate on the objectives of the BA program Research for All

- To stock the libraries with quality resources collection to meet the children's and young adults' interests.

- To satisfy their curiosity, thirst for knowledge and vivid imagination.

- To cultivate specific commendable social values

- To reinforce concepts, such as cleanliness, proper dietary habits and environmental protection.

- To encourage self-reliance in searching for information.

- To provide information on Egypt, so as to strengthen the spirit of belonging.

- To provide information on the world, so as to expand their knowledge and global vision.

- To allow children to use there leisure time fruitfully by carrying out entertaining activities.

- To cultivate artistic appreciation by encouraging children and young adults to understand what they read, research and present; what they understood in the form of drawing, play-acting or creative writing.

- To reinforce all positive inclinations to adopt human values.

- To select stories that reinforce commendable patterns of behavior emphasize the child's sense of criticism and responsibility.

- To develop pupil's skills to use library services, correctly and effectively.

- To encourage individual and/or group research and team work.

- Learn the use of print and non-print sources of information.

- Teaches information literacy, reach better academic performance.

The 'Research For All' program aims at teaching pupils how to do research; by showing them the different ways to look up information in print resources like an article in a magazine, a Reference book, a regular book, or in non-print resources like A/V material or e-resources [websites, databases….].

One of the major features of the Young People (YP) & Children (Ch) Libraries of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina is that parents are not allowed in with the users, at first it was a matter of space, than we looked at this stipulation closely and realized that it is giving our users a sense of freedom to select what they would like to read without parents interference, of course knowing that the literature available in the YP or Ch is selected to suit their reading levels and their interest.

In my belief, if a child learns from his early age how to look up information; how to do research; how to put his research together; how to give credit to all sources of information used in his assignment; how to present his assignment to a group; and how to prepare his assignment either as an individual or as a member of a group; he definitely will learn many things besides the information he was seeking.

He will learn accuracy, how to analyze select and decide on the best information to use. He will also learn public speaking by presenting the results of his research assignment as well as teamwork.

The BA plans to provide to all children using its facilities & services necessary tools needed to achieve both educational and cultural development, through implementing both
the National program ' Reading For All' and
the BA program "Research For All'.

By providing access to various sources of knowledge including adequate chances for self development according to the needs and learning abilities of children; turning reading into a real pleasure of acquiring knowledge and research into a real art of acquiring information.

Making it possible for the next generation to be good decision makers and a more cultured society.

Education through Libraries & Museums

We are privileged at the BA to have other components and not just the library

- **Museums: 1. Antiquities; 2. Manuscripts; 3. History of Science; 4. Planetarium; 5. Exploratorium**

- **Galleries: Permanent: Impressions of Alexandria; The World of Shadi AbdelSalam (artist and film producer) Visiting exhibitions: Arts, Sculpture and many more.**

- **Arts Center: Performing Arts Shows, Arts Classes, Choir and other.**

Users of the library find knowledge and information in library resources; as well as through visiting and participating in all of the above, which together create a Center of Excellence for national & international users.

It is the librarian, who can make the difference in a children or young people library by creating a warm and comfortable environment for its users.
Librarians play a major role since the human element forms the core of library services, especially for children and young adult-readers, who need professional guidance.

And now let us hear from the *BA librarians* responsible for the *Young People Sherine Said* and *Children* Libraries *Ingy Abdelkader*.

They will share with us their experience on how they are organizing their collections and implementing services and activities in their respective libraries.