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SUSTAINABILITY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Dr. Ismail Serageldin

We live in a world of plenty, of dazzling scientific advances and technological breakthroughs. Adventures in cyberspace are at hand. Yet, our times are marred by conflict, violence, debilitating economic uncertainties and tragic poverty.

Globalization grows, fueled by the integration of the world economies, a revolution in computers, IT, and the non-stop activities of capital markets. Equally global are the increasing inequities between societies and within societies. Our environment and ecosystems are under threat.

Here comes the importance of sustainable development.

There have been many definitions of sustainable development, but the generally accepted definition of sustainability is that given by the Brundtland Commission:

"Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

This definition is philosophically attractive but raises difficult operational questions. The meaning of needs is fairly clear for the poor and the starving, but what does it mean for a family that lives in luxury?

A much more attractive concept is: sustainability as opportunity. From this concept sustainability would be defined in the following way:

"Sustainability is to leave future generations as many opportunities as we ourselves have had, if not more."

How does one measure opportunity? In economic terms one could use the concept of capital. In economics and finance, one does not deplete one's capital and consider it an income stream. In fact, it goes to the heart of the definition of income given by Nobel Laureate Sir John Hicks (1946) when he defined income as "the maximum value a person can consume during a week, and still expect to be as well off at the end of the week as at the beginning."

Income based on depletion of capital is not sustainable and should not be accepted as income. However, capital, and the growth of capital, are the means to provide future generations with as many opportunities as, if not more than, we have had, provided that we define it as per capita capital. This takes into account the need to meet the needs of a growing population.

To get to the heart of the concept of sustainability, we must include more than man-made capital as conventionally defined and accepted in the economic literature, to include other forms of capital that are every bit as important to our individual and collective well-being.

We recognize that there are at least four kinds of capital: man-made (the only one usually considered in financial and economic accounts), natural capital (as discussed in many works of environmental economics), human capital (investments in education, health, and nutrition of individuals), and social capital (the institutional and cultural basis necessary for a society to function).

Man-made capital has received a vast amount of study, but what do we mean by the others?

Natural capital is basically our natural endowment and is defined as the stock of environmentally provided assets (such as soil, atmosphere, forests, water, wetlands) that provide a flow of useful goods or services. The flow of useful goods and services from natural capital can be renewable and non-renewable, or marketed and non-marketed. Sustainability means maintaining environmental assets, or at least not depleting them beyond limits. Any consumption that is based on the depletion of natural capital should not be counted as income. It must be accounted for as a reduction of natural capital.

Regarding human capital, there has been considerable progress made in the past four decades in recognizing the importance of human capital formation, meaning that investment in people is now seen as a very high-return investment, especially in developing countries. The mainstream paradigm of development has been expanded to include investment in human resources as an essential ingredient of a development strategy. Investments in health, education, and nutrition are increasingly recommended parts of a national investment strategy.

Recognizing the importance of social cohesion leads directly to social capital, the fourth form of capital to be considered in sustainability. Without a degree of common identification with the forms of governance, and of cultural expression and social behavior that make a society more than the sum of a collection of individuals, it is impossible to imagine a functioning social order.

The myriad institutions that we take for granted as the essential premise of a functioning society must be grounded in a common sense of belonging by the members of that society. The institutions must reflect a sense of legitimacy in their mediation of conflicts and competing claims. In short, if that social capital is not there, the resulting failures make it impossible to talk of economic growth, environmental sustainability, or human well-being.

Sustainability then is the combination of the above-mentioned four kinds of capital per capita that we leave for future generations. We are able to set aside a foolish, yet still prevalent, view among some groups that sustainability requires leaving to the next generation exactly the same amount and composition of natural capital as we found ourselves, by substituting a more promising concept of giving them the same, if not more, opportunities than we found ourselves. This means that the stock of capital that we leave them, defined to include all four forms of capital, should be the same if not larger than what we ourselves found.

When I was working at the World Bank as Vice-President, we quantified the concepts and made estimates of the real wealth of nations. We did two rounds of calculations, adding up to 300 country studies over two-time periods. The results were always the same: human and social capital accounted for about 60% to more than two-thirds of the actual wealth of nations. Man-made capital (produced assets) accounts for 15–20% and natural capital (including ecological services) accounts for the rest. Instead of economists continuously refining their measurement and understanding of man-made capital that seldom accounted for more than 20% of the total, they should focus on a better understanding of the remaining 80% and especially that important human and social capital components.

Human and social capitals are not the same. Human capital is embedded in the human being, and moves with the person when he/she migrates. Social capital is the glue that holds society together. It builds trust, promotes shared values and allows transactions to take place while nurturing solidarity.

How does all this square with the experience and practice of development in Egypt and the Arab world? There is no question that to be competitive, the Arab world needs to improve its governance. By that I mean that Arab societies must ensure that they are global leaders—not reluctant followers—in the promotion of transparency, accountability, pluralism, participation, the rule of law and free flow of information. Democracy, the respect for human rights and gender equality are essential. These are the qualities that promote both human and social capitals; they are not incompatible with our traditions or our cultural identity. Far from it, a proper reading of our heritage demands it.

No claim to cultural specificity can be given sanction if it deprives women of their basic human rights in the name of convention, or mutilates girls in the name of custom. Educating girls and empowering women is one aspect of the transformation that brings good governance and competitiveness together. A society cannot hobble half its population and expect to compete effectively with one that nurtures the talents of all its people. Likewise, we cannot stifle the young, and expect the imaginative designs of tomorrow to emerge from the old. We must create a learning environment that nurtures innovation and respects youth. All these characteristics work in concert to define a state of good governance. Will the Arabs actually do all this? I say, yes. The Arabs, some cynics say, will never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. Untrue. If given half a chance, the Arabs can do a lot, and this was proven in many cases.

Beyond competitiveness and good governance, there is the vision of a better future. A vision that sees development like a tree: it can be nurtured in its growth by feeding its roots, not by pulling on its branches. A vision where freedom and well-being are the ends for which development is the means. Freedom of choice, to all individuals must respect the fundamental human rights of all others. Societies must fashion the wise constraints that make people free. A vision where progress, real progress, is to empower the weak and the marginalized, working in harmony with nature, to become the producers of their own bounty and welfare, not the recipients of charity or the beneficiaries of aid. A vision of sustainability as opportunity, dedicated to leave future generations as many, if not more, opportunities than we have had ourselves.

This is the vision of sustainable development; a vision that is people-centered and gender-conscious, that seeks equity for all and recognizes the interdependence of all living things. An ethical vision, that will lead us to act fairly to each other, to nature and to future generations. It is a vision worthy of the Arab world in the 21st century.

ALEXANDRINA BOOK FAIR 2010:
AN INTERNATIONAL CELEBRATION OF BOOKS

Sarah Elhaddad

The city of Alexandria once again celebrated its annual international book event, as the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) invited publishers from all over the world to participate in the pavilions dedicated to the sale of books and publications.

On Thursday, 25 February 2010, Dr. Ismail Serageldin, Director of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina; General Adel Labib, Governor of Alexandria; and Dr. Khaled Azab, Director of the BA Media Department, inaugurated the 8th Alexandrina International Book Fair, which lasted until 14 March 2010.

General Adel Labib and Dr. Ismail Serageldin inaugurate the Alexandrina International Book Fair

"The Alexandrina International Book Fair is a great addition to Alexandria," said General Adel Labib. "It adds great value to cultural life in Alexandria. It also adds to the many events that mark the selection of Alexandria as the Capital of Arab Tourism in 2010," he added.

Mr. Jean Felix-Paganon, General Adel Labib and Dr. Ismail Serageldin at the Book Fair

In a new tradition this year, and in an attempt to reflect the history and civilization of the city of Alexandria, which is based on pluralism and diversity, the Alexandrina International Book Fair hosted two guests of honor: France and Mauritania.

The inauguration was attended by Mr. Jean Felix-Paganon, French Ambassador to Egypt; Mr. Muhammad Wald Tulbah, Mauritanian Ambassador to Egypt; Mr. Abdullah Salem, Adviser to the Mauritanian Minister of Culture and former Minister of Culture; and Mr. Helmi El-Namnam, Deputy Director of the General Egyptian Book Organization.

The Book Fair was organized by the BA in cooperation with the Egyptian Publishers Association, and with the participation of more than 94 publishing and printing houses from Egypt, France, Italy, Kuwait,

Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and USA. The Book Fair also involved various cultural activities including lectures given by distinguished intellectuals, in addition to book signings and seminars.

In his opening speech, Dr. Ismail Serageldin stressed on the Library's aim to provide all that is new in the world of publishing each year through the Book Fair, and to organize seminars to encourage meaningful and constructive dialogue, in order to enrich the cultural scene in Egypt and the Arab world.

He also affirmed that the Alexandrina International Book Fair has proven to be a rich and worthy event over the past eight years, and has already taken its place among international book fairs.

"I am also very honored to welcome our guests of honor for this year; France and Mauritania," said Dr. Ismail Serageldin. "We are honoring France this year in recognition of its valuable donation of 500,000 books to the BA," he added.

The donated books made the BA the main depository of French books in the Arab world, and the second largest library for Francophone resources outside French–speaking countries, preceded only by the New York Public Library.

Drs. Serageldin, Helmi El-Namnam, and Khaled Azab during the inauguration

The collection is part of the National Library of France (BnF) legal depository and includes a wide range of subjects varying from arts to zoology. The books are also available in different reading levels for users of all ages. They are mostly recently published books, issued during the period from 1996 to 2006.

Mauritania was selected by the organizers as an Arab and African guest of honor, for promoting Mauritanian books and literature and increasing awareness regarding its culture and history among young people. "The Book Fair is a great opportunity for us to celebrate the great leap witnessed in Mauritanian culture, especially in the field of Arabic poetry," declared Serageldin.

"This year, we were very keen on promoting technological means within the exhibition, through the publishing houses and the cultural program. We also dedicate a great deal of the cultural program for young people to discuss their issues and share their opinions and experiences," he added.

Mr. Jean Felix-Paganon expressed his delight to take part in this round of the Book Fair where France was selected to be the guest of honor. He also stressed that the exhibition is the outcome of the continuous cooperation between Egypt and France in all fields, particularly culture and literature.

"The donation made by the National Library of France to the Library of Alexandria comes from their complete faith in the Library's objectives. The donation also expresses the Egyptian and French concern with the exchange of cultures between the two countries," said Felix-Paganon.

Mr. Muhammad Wald Tulbah, said that the Alexandrina International Book Fair is a huge initiative

that combines the prospects of diverse cultures. He added that the Book Fair is an extension of the cooperation between Mauritanians and Egyptians over the years to develop learning and maintain Arab culture.

The French participation in the cultural activities of the Book Fair focused on the development of reading and the role of multimedia and new digital technology in the publication of books. Lectures given by French participants also showed their interest in digital culture and modern technology.

The Book Fair hosted Claudine Dussollier, multimedia researcher; and Françoise Danset, expert in the field of digital books, who gave lectures on applying new digital tools in the field of education and presented practical examples which have been implemented in this area.

Bernard Prost and Gilles Eboli also gave a presentation on the digitization of cultural products and making them available on the Internet. They also explained the role of digitization in providing innovative services to readers, and marketing such digital products for the reader.

Mauritania's participation in the Book Fair was highlighted in a special pavilion presenting the latest most important Arabic Mauritanian books, mostly on the culture and history of the country. Mr. Abdullah Salem also gave a lecture on "Mauritanian-Egyptian Cultural Communication" and Dr. Essam Al-Said; Director of the Egyptian Cultural Center in Mauritania, spoke about the role of the Egyptian Cultural Center in preserving the Arabic language in Mauritania.

The Book Fair also featured this year a remarkable participation from print houses and cultural organizations from other Arab countries, including Kuwait, Libya, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and United Arab Emirates.

Arab participants included the Saudi Cultural Attaché in Cairo, the UAE Center for Strategic Studies and Research, the Syrian Ministry of Culture, the Islamic Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO), the World Islamic Call Society in Libya, and the Kuwaiti Ministry of Information.

The cultural agenda of the Alexandrina International Book Fair also marked the participation of a number of Egyptian writers and novelists, including a lecture by Dr. Youssef Zidan, winner of the Arabic Booker Prize 2009. The Fair also featured the book launch for *Once Upon a Time in Jerusalem*, a novel by Dr. Sahar Hamouda, Deputy Director of the BA Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Center (Alex-Med).

The Alexandrina International Book Fair featured a lecture on "Caricature and its Impact on Society" by Egyptian Caricaturist Amr Fahmy; a symposium with Egyptian science fiction novelist Dr. Nabil Farouk; and a discussion with Egyptian bloggers Ghada Abd Elal and Hisham Alaa.

Dr. Serageldin visiting the BA booth

THE REDA TROUPE:
WHEN ART MIRRORS A NATION'S HISTORY

Kholoud Said

Mahmoud Reda

The history of a nation is not only written by leaders and the military, nor is it merely based on historic events. It is also very much written by intellectuals, scientists, artists, philosophers, and indeed the people at large. Some figures make their way to history by their deeds (or misdeeds); but the larger group of public only exists as "the masses", although equally significant. It is hence that the importance of the Reda Troupe emerges, for it documents the Egyptian folk art, revealing the untold part of a nation's tale that no history book could provide.

In its endeavor to become Egypt's window on the world, the BA Arts Center celebrated, from 15 to 17 December 2009, the golden jubilee of establishing the Reda Troupe for Folk Arts, which marked the emergence of the folk arts movement in Egypt.

The celebration was attended by dancers who participated in the first performance of the Reda Troupe in August 1969, namely: Farida Fahmy, Neveen Ramez, Hassan Affify, Hanaa El-Shorbagy, Nabil Mabrouk, Hamada Hosam Eldin, El-Gedawy Ramadan, Ihab Hassan, Zakaria Abdel Shafy, Nesreen Bahaa, in addition to Mahmoud Reda who, 50 years ago, established the troupe which still bears his name after all these years.

Serageldin with Farida Fahmy and Mahmoud Reda at the ceremony

On the morning of 15 December 2009, the BA honored Mahmoud Reda and Farida Fahmy in recognition of their contribution to Egyptian folk art. Dr. Ismail Serageldin, BA Director, presented a memorial shield from the granite of which the BA was built, with words of gratitude to the history of two great artists. To an audience of the BA staff and friends and the public, Reda and Fahmy gave a presentation entitled "Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of Reda's Troupe", in which they narrated their career journey which started at a time when folk art, and especially dance, was not given its due respect. Thanks to these pioneers, dancing was legitimized as an art and established as a profession.

The presentation also included several photos from the book *Dancing is My Life* by Farida Fahmy and based on the Mahmoud Reda's book *In the Temple of Dance*. Aptly entitled *Dancing is My Life*, the book, published by the BA, depicts Mahmoud Reda's field trips to different Egyptian provinces to document, by way of searching, different sources of folk art.

In itself, the book is a vivid proof that dancing encompasses different art forms and not only choreography: music, songs, costume design, theater, lightening and photography, among others. In his search for inspiration, Mahmoud Reda turned to traditional dances, movements and music from different parts of Egypt. This illustration book documents field trips conducted by Mahmoud Reda and others between 1965 and 1967. At the time, they had to rely on primitive tools to document their observations; still camera, tape recordings and written notes.

As such, this quest for inspiration served as a very rich recollections of the indigenous life styles of inhabitants of different parts of Egypt at the time, including songs, movements, customs, accessories, musical instruments, ways of amusement, habits and traditions, local dialects, among others, something that could have otherwise been perhaps lost forever.

During the presentation, Mahmoud Reda expressed his gratitude to the BA for this recognition, and voiced his desire to donate his personal belongings to the BA. Instantly, it was then decided that the BA would work on creating a digital archive of the Reda Troupe, a vivid and rich chapter of the history of modern art in Egypt.

Established in 1959, Reda Troupe was placed under the auspices of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture in 1965. Since then, it gained international acclaim and the principle dancers were honored by

Folk songs inspired from Al-Sharqiyah Governorate

late President Gamal Abdel Nasser and late King Hussein of Jordan. In its repertoire, the Troupe has around 400 different dances ranging from duets to dramas in 3 acts, and performed in more than 50 countries worldwide.

A roundtable discussion was also held on the fringe lines of the celebration dealing with the current status of folk arts in Egypt. Moderated by Mr. Aly El-Gendy, Director of Alexandria Troupe for Folk Arts, and attended by Mr. Ihab Hassan, Director of the Reda Troupe of Folk Arts, among others, the discussion tackled challenges facing folk arts. By and large, most problems had to do with bureaucracy. Although it was agreed that having folk art under the auspicious of the Ministry of Culture contributed to it enjoying its due respect in society, having to deal with all administrative issues also had its negative impact. The low budget also had its say, in addition to dealing with artists as employees who have specific working hours and a fixed retirement age.

Participants also called for launching a national project related to folk art. They lamented its poor status now: luxury for some, and insignificance for others. The Ministry of Culture was invited to partake its role in reviving authentic and traditional arts, as opposed to imported arts, such as opera, ballet and Western dance, that are very much elevated in comparison. A recommendation for the privatization and sponsorship of folk art troupes was also discussed, in an aim to raise funds for their needs for costumes, performances and training.

The peak of the BA celebration were three performances featuring Reda Troupe from Egypt, and Al Andalus Troupe from Spain held over three days at the BA Conference Center Great Hall, which was fully booked with audiences from all ages. The older generation, the middle-aged and the adults, could

The Reda Troupe performing at the BA

absolutely remember the Troupe's famous songs and movements, especially those immortalized in films- Reda Troupe featured in a couple of Egyptian films, staring Mahmoud Reda and Farida Fahmy, including *Gharam fel Karnak* (Love in Karnak Temple) and *Agazet Nos El-Sana* (Mid-Year Vacation). The younger generations were equally charmed by the performance, and definitely identified themselves with at least parts of the shows, capturing the most significant features of the Egyptian characteristics, for Mahmoud Reda and his colleagues took what they saw during their field trips on stage.

Egyptians will always vividly remember the Reda Troupe in their collective memory. While chanting *Halawet Shamsena* (Our Beautiful Sun) and *Luxor Baladna* (Luxor, Our Home Town), they will always look back with nostalgia and admiration.

Mahmoud Reda dancing with his Troupe at the celebration

TOWARDS A CULTURE OF DIALOGUE

Ayman Elsherbiny

He is Norway's longest serving non-Socialist Prime Minister since World War II, and currently the President of the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights. The Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) invited Mr. Kjell Bondevik on 9 February 2010 to give a lecture entitled "Towards a Culture of Dialogue".

Attended by eminent intellectual figures, Bondevik expressed at the beginning of his lecture his gratitude to visit the BA. "I would like to express how honored I am to give a speech at the BA; a world famous Institution and symbol of Egypt's extremely rich cultural heritage, and indeed a symbol of the cultural history of the world and mankind."

Kjell Bondevik, *Wikipedia*

He then pointed out that he practiced politics for more than 30 years, in which the world has changed, and so did Norway. "In the 1970s, Norway was a rather homogeneous society built on Christian and human values. However, 40 years of steady immigration, as well as increased secularization has changed that reality."

"Immigration and integration are all highly complex issues relating to political, social, and economic developments locally and globally," said Bondevik. "Despite that," he added, "debates in Europe on these issues tend to be reduced to matters of Islamic-Western relations."

He wondered about the reason why Westerners see Islam as a threat to their values, and their political system. "I believe a major cause relates to the lack of social engagement across religious and cultural boundaries. Generally, we can say that Europe is marked by diversity, but not necessarily pluralism," he argued.

The Former Prime Minister quoted Diana L. Eck, Professor of Comparative Religion at Harvard University, in explaining the difference between diversity and pluralism. "Diversity is the existence of diverse religious and cultural communities in a society. It often means communities living side-by-side, and it easily leads to segregation and increased tensions."

"Today, religious diversity is given, but pluralism is not given, it is an achievement. Mere diversity without real encounter and relationship will yield increasing tensions in our societies," says Diana L. Eck.

Bondevik affirmed that tensions have increased between minorities and majority communities in Europe. He referred to the riots that took place in Paris, which were carried out by young, mainly Muslim, men. He also argued that these tensions are not an exclusive French situation, but they occurred in other European countries as well.

"These uprisings display similar feelings and frustrations among these youngsters; a sense of alienation and exclusion. It is the voice of the second and third generation of immigrants that were never given the chance to find their place and role in society."

Diana L. Eck, *Wikipedia*

Kjell Bondevik mentioned the controversy over the Prophet Mohammed Danish cartoons in 2006, which inflamed Muslims' anger all over the world, following their publishing in Danish newspapers and then in other countries, mainly in the West.

He argued that this conflict was solved peacefully in Norway at the time due to an inter-religious dialogue that led to publishing a joint message of non-violence and tolerance launched by the Islamic Council of Norway, and the Church of Norway. "This is a concrete example of the social and political significance an inter-religious dialogue might have," Bondevik stated.

"There is no inherent and inevitable incompatibility between Islamic values and the secular organizing principles of the Western European State. We have to undertake the task of building a shared society," he affirmed.

The Norwegian Former Prime Minister was very clear in admitting that although Norway and many other Western European countries are well integrated societies, there is still a need to adopt a more proactive policy on integration. "Europe has a history in creating "otherness", compared to USA for example, having in mind our history of anti-Semitism, colonialism, and current Islamophobia."

Bondevik said that dialogue is not only a meaningful tool, it is perhaps the only tool to build better relations on the ground between communities and across regions, in addition to building shared societies.

"It is easier for people in conflict to engage in an honest dialogue than in negotiations. In a dialogue, you do not need to give up your positions. Its outcome is not necessarily an agreement," he argued.

"Dialogue in my view is a way of communication which focuses on understanding "the other", rather than convincing them that you are right. This builds knowledge about each other, and minimum of trust which is needed to explore alternative views, and ultimately to reach sustainable agreement."

Bondevik pointed out that inter-religious dialogue and years of cooperation affected him deeply. He named it a "rewarding learning process", in which he learnt how integrated religion is in society and the way of life and thinking for Muslims, unlike an increasingly secular Northern Europe.

"I have learned about the abundant wisdom enshrined in Islamic texts and tradition, much of it originates from sources that Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have in common," he stated.

He stressed on the important role religious leaders can play in conflict prevention and peace-building, saying "by including religious communities and their leaders in peace processes, we can contribute to anchor the peace process much better, considering that religious and political agendas come together in many conflicts around the world."

Bondevik referred to a number of internationally promoted initiatives from influential religious leaders such as the "Common Word" initiative set off by Muslim scholars, clerics, and intellectuals in 2007 as a respond to a speech made by Pope Benedict XVI in 2006.

"I believe religious leaders can bring important values to the table, values of peace human dignity, and human rights," he concluded.

At last, he ended his lecture stressing on the importance of creating platforms and venues for dialogue; for the development of shared societies, and for the fostering of a culture of dialogue, which is ultimately a culture of peace.

Mr. Kjell Magne Bondevik is a Norwegian Lutheran Minister and Politician. He served as Prime Minister of Norway from 1997 to 2000, and from 2001 to 2005.

(Left to right:) Rev. Konrad Raiser, Mohammad Khatami, and Kjell Bondevik. ***World Council of Churches, 2003***

ONE-ON-ONE WITH MARTIN SCORSESE

Sarah Elhaddad

More than two-thousand cinema and art fans stood up in ovation as Dr. Ismail Serageldin; Director of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, welcomed legendary Film Director Martin Scorsese into the Great Hall of the Library, for a dialogue on "Cinema as an Art Form".

The event, which took place on Wednesday, 23 December 2009, was attended by a number of movie stars from Egypt and the Arab world, as well as lovers of Scorsese and cinema.

Martin Scorsese with Dr. Ismail Serageldin

Scorsese, who recently received the Golden Globe Cecil B. DeMille Award for lifetime achievement in motion pictures, is an American film director, screenwriter, producer, actor, and film historian.

He is the founder of the World Cinema Foundation and President of the Film Foundation; a non-profit organization dedicated to film preservation and the prevention of the decaying of motion picture film stock. He has received awards from the Oscars, Golden Globe, BAFTA, and Directors Guild of America.

Early Career

"When we admire the work of a great artist, we often wonder how he got started, especially that in your case, you thought about going into priesthood but ended up making films," said Serageldin.

"I have had asthma all my life, and this contributed in a way to shaping my awareness of film and cinema" replied Scorsese. " I was not allowed to play any sports or such activities. My parents took me to a movie theater for the first time when I was three."

Martin Scorsese with Egyptian Actors Khaled Aboulnaga, Ahmed Elsakka, and Hussein Fahmi

"Growing up in the rough old American-Italian neighborhood in New York, I joined the Catholic school and was greatly inspired by two young priests. They made me look at myself and friends and believe that I can use my head to get an education, and this is how I joined the seminary," he said.

He added: "Eventually, as I joined the New York University (NYU), the passion that I had for what I thought was for religion was sort of transferred to a passion for cinema. I was also fortunate enough to meet a teacher at NYU who inspired me to find the energy and determination to put what I want to say on film."

"You have worked on a number of films in your early career, but it was *Mean Streets* in 1973 that made all the difference, wasn't it?" asked Serageldin.

"Yes" affirmed Scorsese. "*Mean Streets* was a film based on myself, my friends and my neighborhood. In this film, I applied everything I learned from Director/Producer Roger Coleman, who showed me how to plan, prepare, and make a film, and most importantly, the discipline required in making films."

Speaking of other influences and friendships, Scorsese talked about his relationship with actors Robert De Nero and Harvey Keitel. "De Nero, Harvey, and I are like brothers in a way. I met Harvey in 1963 while filming *Who's That Knocking at My Door*, and the friendship started from there."

"As for De Nero, we knew each other from the American-Italian neighborhood when we were 15, but did not really socialize. We met later in 1970 through Director Brian De Palma. My relationship with De Nero is very close and he somehow knows me better than I know myself sometimes," said Scorsese.

"Almost everybody considers *Raging Bull* one of the best movies of all time, what was so special about Jake LaMotta's character that made you want to make the film?" asked Serageldin.

"I did not want to make this film as I did not know anything about boxing. After making *New York New York* and *The Last Waltz*, I felt that I was onto something again. Robert De Nero also encouraged me to do it" declared Scorsese. "Besides, I thought it was very interesting to show people what a boxer perceives or hears during a fight."

"The film was also how we got one million dollars to make *Taxi Driver*, which I was very passionate about. It was a film I directed just for the love of it, and did not know that people would react very strongly to it," he added.

Scripts, Editors, and Actors

When asked about his choice of scripts, Scorsese mentioned that most of the films he directed were sort of presented to him by other directors or actors. "I was very interested in making *Goodfellas* because of its great story, and *The Color of Money* because of actor Paul Newman, who was the first film star I worked with."

He stated: "I was also very eager to make *The Last Temptation of Christ* in 1988, a film that inspired me to make my current project, a film based on the book *Silence* which is written by the great Japanese Christian author Shusaku Endo. It narrates the story of two Portuguese missionaries who travelled to Japan in the 17th century to administer the Japanese Christians."

Scorsese talked about the special relationship he has with his team of cinematographers, photographers, and editors. "I think what makes us a good team is that our personalities are very similar. I have been enjoying working with Editor Thelma Schoonmaker for 35 years. She knows me very well, and she is very dedicated to the films we make."

"Everyone in the moviemaking business is similar, but they express themselves in different ways. I think the actors are the key to each film" affirmed Scorsese. "For me, I have been very blessed by working with actor Leonardo DiCaprio four times, he is a very good actor and is attracted to the same themes and ideas I am attracted to."

"I also think that working with producers can be very challenging; sometimes dealing with producers is a very difficult experience. A good producer can make possible what a director wants, and can effectively support his vision."

"*Gangs of New York* is a remarkably authentic film, and *The Departed* is the film in which you received your long overdue Oscar recognition. What makes these films different or special?" asked Serageldin.

"*Gangs of New York* was something I was very passionate about. I wanted to make it for a very long time but we only could get it financed and released in 2002. The film deals with a very important part of American history and its authenticity comes from its characters who were based on real characters of that time," he stated.

He added: "*The Departed* was a surprise to me. I wanted to make it as a low-budget motion picture and did not expect it to be a blockbuster, and I certainly was surprised by the recognition it got."

"Do do you think cinema can break the ice between the West and the Muslim world?" asked Serageldin a question coming from the audience.

"Of course it can, I do believe that cinema is people projected on a big screen" replied Scorsese. "The objective of the Film Foundation is restoring film from different parts of the world, and that idea was important as I became aware that we should get ideas from the people within the culture, not the West's point of view concerning other cultures."

"Restoring films is going to be so valuable, not only for the past films but in the future, as it makes us able to watch films from different cultures."

"I think cinema can be a very strong and important tool that helps bring at least a bit of understanding, appreciation and respect for other cultures," concluded Scorsese.

The audience listening to the Serageldin-Scorsese dialogue

"ABU SIMBEL ..." CELEBRATES HUMAN HERITAGE SALVAGE

Sarah Elhaddad

In 1959, the Egyptian Government officially requested that UNESCO launch an international appeal, in order to raise donations to carry out a material, technical, and scientific project to salvage the monuments of ancient Nubia.

The project was necessary after the High Dam was built to the south of the city of Aswan, putting dozens of buildings and archaeological sites at risk of being submerged, including Abu Simbel Temples; two massive rock temples that were originally carved out of the mountainside during the reign of Pharaoh Ramesses II in the 13th century BCE. After raising 40 million dollars, the salvage of Abu Simbel Temples began in 1964, and by 1968, the entire site was reassembled in a new location.

The Project in Pictures

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina Antiquities Museum, in cooperation with the World Wide Artists Gallery in Rome, organized "Abu Simbel: The Salvaging of the Temples, Man and Technology" Exhibition and Conference, 10–13 January 2010, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the salvage of Abu Simbel Temples, and to honor those who carried out the tasks of the salvage project.

Badrya Serry and Fabio Lopez during the Conference

The exhibition was held under the auspices of the UNESCO office in Cairo; and in collaboration with the Embassy of Italy in Cairo, the Italian Archaeological Center, the Italian Institute of Culture, and the Italian-Egyptian Center for Restoration and Archaeology.

The photographic exhibition is composed of about 60 photographic big size panels, each of them having its own structure in aluminum, and its caption in English. The curators of the exhibition have collected this important photographic material, that was never exhibited before to an international public, specifically for the Abu Simbel Exhibition.

"The photographs take visitors into a fabulous journey, through a sequence of salvaging operations, and reveal the technology applied in this to achieve such an adventurous endeavor," said Badrya Serry, Director of the BA Antiquities Museum, during the opening of the conference.

Serry added that the exhibition is set up in such a way as to reach the public at large, thus, availing all the information and details of what was achieved during the project, with the exclusive advantage of the knowledge of the human patrimony.

Dr. Medhat Abdul Rahman, Architect and Consulting Engineer for the Abu Simbel salvage project, declared that the exhibition aims at explaining the salvage to the public through photographs that document the conditions of the site before the salvage, the international projects conducted, cutting the temple into blocks, the temporary storing and the reconstruction.

Abdul Rahman explained that in 1964, a number of engineers started the salvage project with the sponsorship of UNESCO. A cofferdam was constructed to provide temporary shelter from the slow, but relentless rise of the Nile water, that resulted from the presence of the High Dam.

"The re-erection of the blocks was a triumph of Geometry," said Abdul Rahman. "The temples were re-built in such a way that respects the Pharaoh's wish, expressed in the precision of their construction, that, twice a year, the first rays of the morning sun, would illuminate the sanctuary in the heart of the Great Temple," he added.

The first dismantling operations

Abu Simbel, which is part of the UNESCO World Heritage site known as the "Nubian Monuments", is composed of two temples. The Great Temple was dedicated to the gods Amun, Ra-Horakhty, and Ptah, as well as to Ramesses himself. The Small Temple was dedicated to the goddess Hathor and Ramesses II's chief consort, Nefertari.

In May 1965, the temple was cut into blocks, and each and every block was marked with a code number that indicated which temple it belonged to and the position of the piece. After lifting them by cranes, the blocks were lowered onto a low loader and transported slowly to the storage area.

The temple façades were covered by sandfills to protect them from any falling fragments during the dismantling operations. At the same time, the internal parts of the two temples were re-enforced with tailor-made steel scaffolding on air cushions, to support the weight of the newly-cut blocks and prevent them from falling.

The restoration of the original landscape was the final step in the project. Artificial hills were constructed to envelope the temples and create an adequate surrounding environment. Supporting concrete protective arched domes were therefore designed to transfer the loads created by the sandstone coverage away from the temple walls, and to leave open spacing at the tops of the walls and columns to allow for any displacement and create ventilation.

The delicate maneuvers to avoid tilting before giving Ramesses II his face back

Nations Come to the Rescue

"European Nations realized the historical value of the Temples and did not hesitate to participate in the salvage of such a great monument," said Mr. Fabio Lopez, Project Manager at the World Wide Artists Gallery. He added that all the machinery employed in the operations were donated from Europe to Egypt, including 630 tons of digging and excavation machinery, 135 tons of compressors, pneumatic drills, 350 tons of hauling and lifting machines and 610 tons of vehicles.

"With the help of this exhibition, future generations will be able to carry with them the brotherhood of man between populations. This salvage project is a testimony of a cooperation amongst all the countries of the world, to save, not only the magnificent monuments, but also, and above all, the history of mankind as a whole," stressed Lopez.

Lopez also affirmed that the exhibition, not only concentrates on the natural, historical, and archaeological value of the site, but also the anthropological aspects, with emphasis on the persons involved in the works, the methods they adopted in their projects and the machinery used.

"The value of Abu Simbel salvage project is highlighted in the ability of men of different nationalities to come together in order to save an important part of the human heritage," declared Patrizia Raveggi, Director of the Italian Institute of Culture in Cairo. "This exhibition is a great initiative that aims at keeping the memory of the Egyptian Cultural Heritage alive," added Raveggi.

Raveggi referred to UNESCO's great efforts to realize the project, and take the initiative of bringing Abu Simbel exhibition to Egypt. She said that the exhibition follows the international conference "Lower Nubia: Revisiting Memories of the Past, Envisaging Perspectives for the Future" organized by UNESCO and held in Aswan, in March 2009, in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the salvage campaign for the Nubian Temples.

"Without the unique contribution made by the Egyptian population, all efforts would have been in vain," said Costanza De Simone; expert in Cultural Heritage at the UNESCO Cairo Office. She added that Egypt called for an international appeal on its own before asking the help of UNESCO, and paid 12 million dollars of the total 40 million dollars used in the salvage project.

Rosanna Pirelli, expert at the Italian Archaeological Center in Cairo, said that various countries including Italy deeply believed in providing financial and scientific support for the salvage of the temples, driven by a feeling of solidarity that went beyond the specific support of each country.

"Beside the esthetic value of this exhibition, it has also become the home of a global experience, which marks the generosity and cooperation of many countries to face this great danger," added Pirelli. She also confirmed that the exhibition now has its worldwide preview, noting that the events marking the 50th anniversary of the salvage of Abu Simbel Temples will continue around the world in 2010, in celebration of the most fascinating adventures of man to save the precious human heritage.

The preparation of the cofferdam at the Great Temple

AGREEMENT TO LAUNCH AN ARAB ENCYCLOPEDIA OF LIFE

Ayman Elsherbiny

The Encyclopedia of Life (EOL) is an unprecedented global partnership between the scientific community and the general public. Our goal is to make freely available to anyone knowledge about all the world's organisms. Anybody can register as an EOL member and add text, images, videos, comments or tags to EOL pages. Expert curators ensure quality of the core collection by authenticating materials submitted by diverse projects and individual contributors. Together we can make EOL the best, most comprehensive source for biodiversity information.

EOL website (www.eol.org)

Ismail Serageldin and James Edwards signing the MoU

The Encyclopedia of Life (EOL) is an ambitious, even audacious, project to organize and make available via the Internet virtually all information about life present on Earth. At its heart lies a series of Web sites—one for each of the approximately 1.9 million known species—that provide the entry points to this vast array of knowledge. The entry-point for each site is a species page suitable for the general public, but with several linked pages aimed at more specialized users. The sites sparkle with text and images that are enticing to everyone, as well as providing deep links to specific data.

Initiated with private funding in the US, the EOL is now spreading to many other parts of the world, where regional EOLs, serving information about the species found in that region, are being developed.

On the fringe lines of the Pan-Arab Biodiversity Conference, organized by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) Center for Special Studies and Programs, 14–15 December 2009, the BA (on behalf of the Arab Biodiversity Committee), and the Smithsonian Institution, USA, (on behalf of the EOL), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), according to which an Arab Encyclopedia of Life will be launched.

"The Arab EOL is sponsored by the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development," explained Dr. Ismail Serageldin, Librarian of Alexandria.

He added that the BA will collaborate with Arab scientists, researchers, and the general public to compile this regional Arab EOL website, by providing information on species distributed in the Arab world, including digitized biodiversity literature published in Arabic.

"We shall also translate into Arabic portions of the material in the EOL," said Serageldin.

Dr. James Edwards, Executive Director of EOL, praised the idea of developing an Arab EOL. "Regional EOLs have already begun in Australia, China and the Netherlands, and are underway in Central America, South Africa, and now, the Arab region," he stated.

"The EOL community is especially pleased to welcome the Arab EOL to our growing family of institutions providing information about the world's biodiversity."

Edwards pointed out that the EOL user community is quite broad, ranging from scientists to policymakers, regulators, schoolchildren, teachers, and the general public.

He added that EOL has focused on five interlocking activities: developing open-source software for assembling and accessing species information; assembling species pages, with the data coming from a wide variety of sources; digitizing literature, serving it for free, and linking it to the species pages; developing educational uses and users, in classrooms and for citizen scientists; and finally bringing together the scientific community to develop synthetic uses of the species information.

The EOL dynamically synthesizes biodiversity knowledge about all known species, including their taxonomy, geographic distribution, collections, genetics, evolutionary history, morphology, behavior, ecological relationships, and importance for human well-being.

"Each EOL species page contains descriptions, images, maps, references, and links from many sources," said Cynthia Parr, Director of Species Pages Group, EOL.

Cynthia Parr at the Pan-Arab Biodiversity Conference

She mentioned four main approaches to creating species pages: we partner with existing online databases, we provide tools for contributing new content, we build a network of curators—professional scientists or committed citizen naturalists who provide credentials—to review and rate contributed information, and we foster regional Encyclopedias of Life.

Regional EOL projects assemble and serve information about the species of vital interest to them, in the languages of their regions. The EOL ensure them access to tools, best practices, and compatible technology, so that regional efforts seamlessly exchange data with and serve both their own communities and the larger world through EOL.

"While most of the information flowing through EOL is provided generously on a volunteer basis, we have recently begun a fellowship program to provide partial support for a small number of early-career scientists, which serves as a model for catalyzing online science," stated Parr.

"Through modern technology, the Encyclopedia of Life community promotes global understanding of the species with whom we share our planet, and which are critical to the future of biological diversity," she concluded.

The Encyclopedia of Life aims in the next few years to generate a million species pages, most of which will be authenticated by experts, digitize a large portion of biodiversity literature, generate educational materials for students, schools and universities, and use EOL resources to generate new synthetic knowledge about the world's biodiversity.

"We are committed to providing information for free, with as few restrictions on re-use as possible. We are committed to clearly crediting the sources of the information we serve and urge our visitors to cite and visit the original sources." EOL Licensing Policy.

NEW UNESCO DIRECTOR AT THE BA

Kholoud Said

Shortly after resuming her post, Ms. Irina Bokova, Director of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) visited the BA, on Monday, 7 December 2009, accompanied by a high profile delegation, during her official visit to Egypt that lasted for two days.

Bokova was received by Dr. Ismail Serageldin, BA Director, who took the delegation on a tour to show them the Library's projects and services, in addition to its main facilities, such as the Manuscripts Museum, Antiquities Museum, Sadat Museum, Culturama Show, the "Impressions of Alexandria" Exhibition (the Awad Collection), Nasser Digital Archive, and VISTA.

Irina Bokova at the BA Manuscripts Museum

Following the tour, a panel discussion entitled "Egypt and UNESCO: Future Perspective" took place. The discussion was moderated by Dr. Ismail Serageldin, and the panelists were Dr. Hany Helal, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research; Dr. Yousry Elgamal, Minister of Education, Mrs. Yousrya Sawiress, Sawiress Foundation for Social Development; Dr. Hossam Badrawi, Chair of the Education Committee at the Peoples' Assembly; Dr. Eman El-Kafass, Professor at the American University in Cairo; Dr. Mounir Nametallah and Mrs. Anissa Hassouna, Civil Society Activists.

General Adel Labib, Governor of Alexandria; Dr. Hend Hanafy, President of Alexandria University; in addition to officials in the fields of education, science, culture, and media attended the discussion.

At the onset of her speech, Bokova expressed her delight on visiting the BA, "a dream for every European" for all its treasures. She added that she is proud of what the UNESCO has done for the construction of this temple of civilization and knowledge, while in itself is a symbol of international collaboration.

The first female ever to be elected UNESCO Director listed some of the challenges facing today's world, believing that UNESCO is the best place to give some solutions. "Had the international organization not been invented after the World War II, we would have created it now. More challenges are arising, on top of which is lack of respect for others," added Bokova, and with this tendency, tolerance, understanding and dialogue are very much needed.

The starting point, in her point of view, is the recognition from the rich countries that other countries also exist. A positive move was, as she sees it, that the Group of 8 (G8) become the Group of 20 (G20).

Ms. Irina Bokova, also the first Eastern European to head the international organization, spoke about the new UNESCO theme — "UNESCO in a Globalized World: New Humanism in the 21st Century." She emphasized that her policies will focus on good governance, multilateralism, cultural diversity, tangible and intangible world heritage, identity and environment, with special attention to human aspects. High quality inclusive education and scientific research will also be in the spotlights, in addition to gender equality and women empowerment.

She saw a vivid example in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), eight development goals that 192 United Nations Member States and several international organizations have agreed to achieve by the year 2015, during the Millennium Summit held in 2000.

She ended with a note of hope, referring back to the time of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights when people thought it was utopian. She called for the participation of all: UNESCO staff, Member States, civil society, youth and officials.

Before visiting Alexandria, Bokova had lengthy talks with President Hosni Mubarak, soon after she arrived, in Sharm El-Sheikh. They discussed a range of issues, including the challenges of globalization, the role of UNESCO, especially in middle-income countries, and the situation in the Middle East. The Director-General also discussed with the Egyptian First Lady, Suzanne Mubarak, the culture of peace, the Education For All project and the role of women in society. The Director-General invited Mrs. Mubarak to visit UNESCO headquarters in Paris in the coming months.

Bokova also met with a number of Ministers, including Farouk Hosni, Minister of Culture, and her rival candidate at the UNESCO elections; and

Serageldin and Bokova during the panel discussion

Tarek Kamel, Minister for Communications, with whom she discussed opportunities for developing UNESCO activities in Egypt, including projects involving Education For All, training for Egyptian teachers on new information technologies, science education, intangible heritage and the underwater museum in Alexandria.

On 7 December 2009, Bokova inaugurated the Permanent Forum of Arab-African Dialogue in Cairo, on the theme of Arab-African Migration.

Born in Sofia, Bulgaria, in 1952, Irina Gueorguieva Bokova was the Ambassador of Bulgaria to France, Permanent Delegate to UNESCO; and Personal Representative of the President of Bulgaria to the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie (2005-2009). A career diplomat and politician, she studied at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations and at the School of Public Affairs of the University of Maryland, USA. She served as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs (1995-97) and Minister of Foreign Affairs (1996/97). In 1996, as candidate to the post of Vice-President of Bulgaria, she advocated her country's membership in the NATO and the European Union. She was previously a member of the Bulgarian Parliament from the Bulgarian Socialist Party for two terms.

BOB KAHN: WE WILL NEVER SEE MACHINES TAKEOVER INDIVIDUALS' FUNCTIONS

Ayman Elsherbiny

Giving a lecture at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) entitled "Managing Information on the Net: the Digital Object Architecture", the BA Quarterly Newsletter took advantage of interviewing Robert (Bob) E. Kahn, co-inventor of the Internet, and founder of the Corporation for National Research Initiatives.

Could you please tell us about your reminiscence on "The Dawn of the Internet"

The Internet grew out of a desire, on my part, to see several different packet networks that I have been involved in developing, work together and have computers that might be on these different nets being able to interact with each other. In the late 1960s, I was involved in the system design of the very first terrestrial net called the Arpanet. Subsequent to that, I created a network called packet radio which is broadcast radio with mobile devices in the early 1970s. We also built a network on "Intelsat 4" to connect US researchers with researchers in several European countries. Given those three networks, the question was how to make them work together, as there were very different kinds of packet nets, and how to get computers to work together over them. That was really the dawn of the Internet.

Did you, and Professor Vinton Cerf, expect the Internet to be so transformative of the world?

As a research project, our goal was to find out how to connect the computers, we were not really thinking about transforming the world. In fact, I would go so far as to say that anybody who sets out on a project that is supposed to transform the world, would probably fail. There are too many who invest in interests, but when you start down a path and nobody thinks it will lead anywhere you might just succeed.

With the Internet, in the 1972/73 timeframe, very few people thought this idea of linking networks and computers would lead anywhere, financially or socially. As computers were very expensive, they did not expect to have many of them. Most people had not even thought about the possibility of getting their own personal machines. That just did not seem like a very productive long-term investment. So, very few parties were interested except the research community.

When we really started, it was just a research project and we were trying to succeed as scientists.

What do you see as likely breakthroughs in this field?

I think in terms of innovations that have not been yet conceived, I really would not want to speculate, it is hard to know what is just going to come out. I have been very surprised at how all the social networking has taken on. I do not have a good sense of how long that is likely to be, or whether there are new innovations that will displace them very quickly. We have seen certain activities that come and go, and others that have stayed around for a while.

I think the real breakthroughs are going to come in the area of more semantic understanding of what is going on with the information that is available on the net, so that we can deal with issues such as automated processing of information, or maybe automated translation services, or multi-linguisim in various forms. It is a little hard to say what innovations would occur that have not been yet invented. I know mobiles will continue to increase, mobile devices, and mobile access. Broadband penetration looks like it is continuing to increase. I think we will see more people on the net in the future, but as far as specific innovations, I am not sure that anybody can really speculate accurately about them.

What is Dr. Kahn presently doing?

I have been working on what is known as the Digital Object Architecture (DOA). I see this DOA as a way of managing information in the form of structured information digital objects as they are, regardless of what the formulation is for creating those objects and otherwise managing them.

My current work is focusing on the problems of managing information on the net, accessing it, and doing it with regard to some of the issues that people care about the most, protecting their information, especially if it is private information.

Search engines are all about basically searching through the public web, but much of the information that is very personal, or private, or individual will never be discovered by the search engines. So, they need to be separately catalogued and managed. So, I have been thinking about that issue, and particularly about managing information that you may want to access, and have future generations access over very long periods of time. By that I mean centuries, millennia, maybe even perpetually.

Now there exists the ability to apply for non-Latin character domain names on the Internet, and Arabic is one of the target languages. What is the significance of such advancement?

I think it got some very strong positives and few negatives. Among the positive are that it is going to make more information available to more people, but as that increase in information occurs, people who do not speak the language are suddenly going to find that they have access to information that they cannot understand. So, they may not know that they want to click on certain identifiers that they do not understand in terms of the foreign language, or they cannot easily access the metadata that is associated with it.

I think in terms of fundamental advancement, the more investment that we can make in getting different languages represented, the more I think eventually those problems will be solved. Everything that we have been doing is based on the use of Unicode which allows for arbitrary language representations. So, post breakthroughs in language understanding and semantic interpretation, I think we will go a long way to make multi-linguism happen.

Are there limits to computer powers?

The real question is are there limits to powers of people to make use of computers? I think we have really not come to grips with that question. I have a colleague in the USA who has been arguing that things are getting faster and faster and faster, and will continue to do so for the indefinite future. When I ask him what is it that is going to allow people to keep up with the machines? He says "Well, the computers will help the people react to what the machines are doing at the speed of the machines" and I think he might have been talking about having those machines take over the functions of the individuals. I do not think we will ever see that. The machines can go faster and faster but it is ultimately the social uses of those machines of functional uses that matter and my guess is that computer technology will continue to increase and our challenge will be to figure out how to leverage it.

Is artificial intelligence yielding results?

The field of artificial intelligence has been around now since, I would say, the late 1950s, when it was first introduced as a topical area by people such as John McCarthy, Marvin Minsky, and few others; and it meets some really interesting progress over the years. Many of the developments that came out of the artificial intelligence field were viewed as things that were not terribly possible, and once they were shown to be possible, people said they were not artificial intelligence anymore.

So artificial intelligence is always left to deal with the issues that people do not think can be solved, and when they do, it is not artificial intelligence. Thus, they have a very high threshold in order to succeed in the future.

They had many successes today, I mean the whole field of expert systems emerged from the artificial intelligence field; heuristic processing, production level systems, that have enabled machines to provide expert advice and opinions about well-clarified ideas in medicine, in manufacturing, and so forth. There has been significant progress in the field of artificial intelligence in dealing with understanding speech, spoken natural language, and in understanding written natural language. There has been significant progress in understanding images and understanding video in some cases. That whole field is progressing at a rate where sometimes the ability to make substantial progress depends on a lot of small advancements in other areas, that are all synthesized and integrated together.

People have had the notion that artificial intelligence was going to impart machines the ability to be smarter than people in most if not every way, and I think that that is not going to happen certainly in our lifetime and maybe never. There is a certain ability and capacity that people have that I do not think we yet have any clue as to whether we could ever impart to a non-huminanity.

So, it remains an interesting area that a lot of people will study for many years, but the best I think we can hope for in the near term is that it provides good cognitive support of things that people do.

Robert (Bob) E. Kahn is Chairman, CEO and President of the Corporation for National Research Initiatives (CNRI), which he founded in 1986, after a 13-year term at the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). CNRI was created as a non-profit organization to provide leadership and funding for research and development of the National Information Infrastructure.

THE BLISS OF IGNORANCE DENIED "WE-DIA"

Dina Elodessy

The word "media" must have emerged as an obscure Latin plural of medium; a word first borrowed into English late in the sixteenth century and used to denote "something lying in an intermediate position". Sadly, words have not always been faithful to their original meanings; they often change, develop and at times refer to a value opposite to that from which it evolved.

In today's world, the formal media, through which information is disseminated, has become more and more biased, abandoning its golden mean of objectivity to a rather more inclined position. It no longer delivers truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Sides are being taken at the high expense of integrity, and the show continues to blur and baffle.

In the renowned Gettysburg Address, the late President Abraham Lincoln claimed that the American "nation shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth." This promise of democracy is not limited to a certain time, or place, for it addresses all citizens of the world. One cannot help but wonder if the innovations of technology will turn this long-held dream into a solid reality? Will a voice be given to the voiceless? Could "we-dia", as referred to by some, salvage the media from the pitfall to which it is hurriedly heading?

Arabic cover of "We the Media"

Dan Gillmor brings back to life similar hopes in the title of his page-turner book, *We the Media: Grassroots Journalism by the People, for the People*. The book recounts the story of an emerging phenomenon that is expected to change the face of news industry and revolutionize the way through which information is delivered. It is about journalism's transformation from a 20th century mass-media structure to something profoundly more democratic.

As Gilmor puts it, "humans have always told each other stories, and each new era of progress has led to an expansion of storytelling. This is also a story of a modern revolution, however, because technology has given us a communications toolkit that allows anyone to become a journalist at little cost, and, in theory, with global reach. Nothing like this has ever been remotely possible before."

Readers of the book will be enlightened on how grassroots journalism has managed to dismantle Big Media's monopoly on the news. If the arrogant institutions of Big Media, created via the economics of publishing and broadcasting, treated news as a lecture and manipulated the power of information, tomorrow's news reporting will turn it into a conversation.

Instead of being told what to believe, the former audience has already chosen to enjoy a rather more participatory role in the news-making process. The official news report has to compete with thousands of nonstandard news sources; popular weblogs, mailing lists, chat groups, personal and online forums wherein diverse stances and viewpoints are continuously defended. A worldwide audience reads such independent and unfiltered reports and they choose whether to believe or disbelieve. Whatever the case may be, the trivia of news is just one click away!

Gillmor eloquently criticizes the *status quo*, claiming that "as the pace of life has quickened, our collective attention span has shortened. [He] supposes it is asking too much of commercial TV news to occasionally use the public airwaves to actually inform the public, but the push for profits has crowded out depth. The situation is made worse by the fact that most of us do not stop long enough to consider what we have been told, much less seek out context, thereby allowing ourselves to be shallow and to be led by people who take advantage of it. A shallow citizenry can be turned into a dangerous mob more easily than an informed one."

However, owing to high-speed Internet connections, digital cameras, SMS and so forth, the shallowness of ignorance can neither be afforded nor tolerated. Truth does find its way through the mazes of governmental delusion and fraud. Anonymously-taken digital photographs of Americans abusing Iraqi prisoners in Abu Gharib prison escaped to the gigantic World Wide Web, defaming the Bush administration and proving, once again, that secrets are becoming far more difficult to keep.

In his book, Gillmor thoroughly investigates the pros and cons of this *status quo*, shedding light on the wake-up call that newsmakers, politicians, business executives and celebrities receive every now and then; control once exercised in the top-down world of Big Media is now a thing of the past.

By laying out the tools of grassroots journalism, he not only guides the formal audience to become producers of the self-same news they once consumed, but he also invites professional journalists to join the conversation and discover the plethora of opportunities that might enhance their profession instead of challenge it. He aims for a world where citizen journalists can become both competitors and collaborators with established news organizations. He writes: "I take it for granted, for example, that my readers know more than I do, and this is a liberating, not threatening, fact."

In its essence, *We the Media* is a book about people and for people. It is rich with anecdotes of ordinary men trying to do extraordinary things; people such as Glenn Reynolds, a law professor whose blog postings turned him into a source for professional journalists on the issues of technology and liberty;

and Iraqi blogger Zayed, whose *Healing Iraq* blog "had become a key channel for anyone who wanted to understand how occupied Iraq (or at least that part of Baghdad) was faring. His reports were thorough and revealing, and his readership grew quickly once word got around."

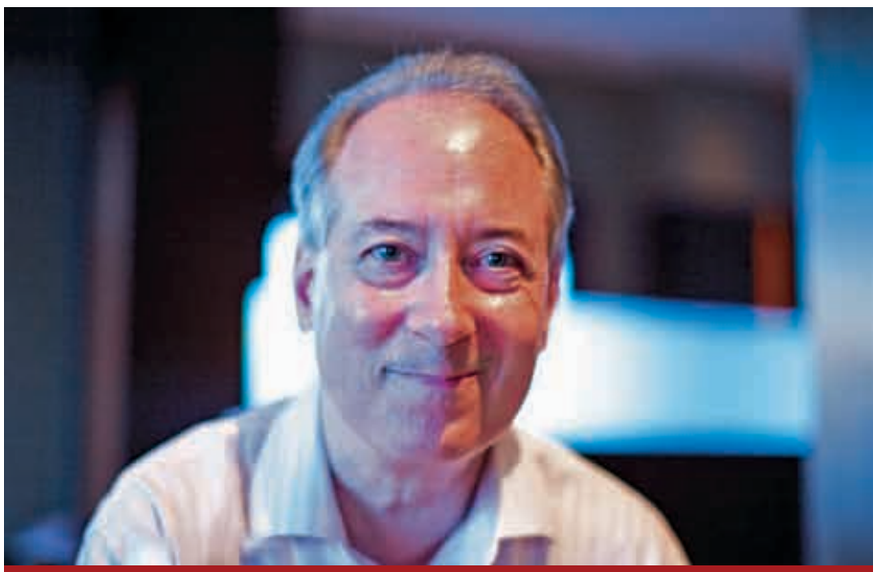
The book is laden with many case studies as well as miscellaneous examples that refer to electoral campaigns, scandalous political scoops and repressive regimes that "discovered the power of personal publishing some time ago and have been trying to keep the most widely listened, to voices, at least those critical of the regime or who discuss forbidden topics, out of general circulation."

Furthermore, Gillmor ardently criticizes the ways through which the copyright law has been extended and perverted, on account of "the unholy alliance between the entertainment industry—what [he] calls the copyright cartel—and government. He asserts how governments are very uneasy about the free flow of information and that such forces of control, whether political or economic, "are pushing harder and harder to clamp down on our networks. To preserve their business models, which are increasingly outmoded in a digital age, they would restrict innovation, and ultimately, the kinds of creativity on which they founded their own businesses."

After discussing the status of media and making an educated guess about its future, *We the Media* ends in a very hopeful note after which the reader feels that his voice does really matter, and that his opinions are worth being said and listened to. We can all make our own news. We can all be, in the words of Gandhi, the "change we want to see in the world". So let the world hope that we will all write our stories and become journalists for a better tomorrow.

Dan Gillmor, US business and technology columnist, is the Director of the Knight Center for Digital Media Entrepreneurship at Arizona State University, USA. He is also the founder of Grassroots Media Inc., a project aimed at enabling grassroots journalism and expanding its reach.

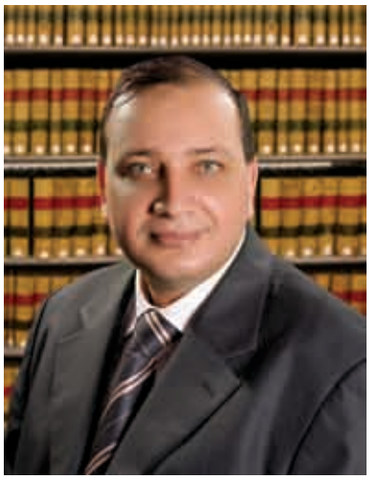
Dan Gillmor donated copies of his book to the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, wherein he gave an enlightening open discussion session. The book has been translated into Arabic as part of the US Embassy in Cairo's Arabic Book Translation Program.



Dan Gillmor, *Flickr*

LIBRARIES AND THE CULTURE OF DIALOGUE

Dr. Khaled Azab



Throughout history, Alexandria has been a very renowned world city. By reviving the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA), the spirit of openness and scholarship has been once again evoked from the city. The Library is concerned with calling for, and spreading the culture of dialogue, at local, regional and international levels. The BA's activities tend to promote this dialogue through a set of events, programs and activities.

Such activities contribute to fulfilling the BA's objective; to be Egypt's window on the world and the world's window on Egypt. The Library's joint programs are also meant to encourage cooperation and the exchange of ideas and expertise between Egyptian researchers and their international peers. Thus, the Library established several research centers, participated in various initiatives and launched many projects in order to consolidate its role in this respect.

The BA's Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Center (Alex-Med) aims to recreate the historical role of Alexandria and its civilization in the region through rediscovering the city's spirit of plurality, tolerance and cooperation, in order to regain its special place among Mediterranean countries.

The Center has conducted specialized researches on Alexandria and the countries of the Mediterranean basin, in addition to the works that digitalize and preserve the city's patrimony. The Center has also established a data bank of resources related to Alexandria's history, literature and arts, and has published a series of handbooks on renowned personalities and topics related to Alexandria.

A great part of dialogue promotion depends on establishing partnerships. In 2004, Alex-Med contributed to supporting the Egyptian-Swedish bid to host the Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures and to have the Foundation's headquarters at the BA, as the Egyptian connecting link between the dialogue of civilizations networks. In April 2005, the Foundation was inaugurated, establishing its headquarters in the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, at the BA.

Following the same pattern is the BA Calligraphy Center, one of the unconventional research centers of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. This Center studies the emergence of calligraphy in all cultures, and focuses on world inscriptions, calligraphies and writings from pre-historical times up to the contemporary period. The Center's agenda of activities includes organizing international forums of calligraphy, writing and inscriptions; issuing *Abgadiyat*, a yearly scientific journal specialized in calligraphy; and hosting exhibitions, in an attempt to serve the idea of establishing dialogue amongst nations.

The third objective of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina is to become a focal point of dialogue and cultures. Therefore, the Library created a Dialogue Forum which provides the public with an opportunity to freely

express one's point of view, and establishes a creative critical dialogue between the most renowned Arab intellectuals.

The Forum's symposia, which are organized every two weeks, handle various topics. Every symposium is followed by an open time period for questions, discussions and exchange of ideas, in order to adopt the spirit of tolerance and spread the concept of understanding through Forum topics.

The Dialogue Forum also organizes the annual Arab Reform Conference which brings together the most renowned Arab personalities to discuss political, economic, social and cultural reform issues in the Arab world. The Forum aims at spreading a total Arab reform vision, in addition to creating a network of reform enthusiasts in the Arab world.

Concerned with development issues and building partnerships and information systems, the BA decided to get involved in the World Bank's Development Gateway Project, in order to address the existing shortage of development information in the Arab world.

The Development Gateway is another interactive portal for sharing information and knowledge sharing on sustainable development and poverty reduction in developing countries. The Gateway offers users access to the most comprehensive database of development projects, an international procurement marketplace and knowledge sharing on key development topics.

The BA has agreed, with the World Bank, to collaborate in this project by taking ownership of the main Gateway site in Arabic; in addition to designing, developing and hosting the Egypt Country Gateway in Arabic. The Arabic version of the main Gateway was officially launched in 2007.

Another project the BA is involved in is the Universal Networking Language (UNL) project. The idea of the UNL was initiated within the United Nations and devised by the Universal Networking Digital Language (UNDL) Foundation. The project enables all people to generate information and have access to cultural knowledge in their native languages.

The UNL is based on the principle of exchanging artificial languages "interlingua" (an artificial language based on Romance languages and was used as a universal means of communication between scientists), then elaborating an electronic translation in all languages.

The Library plays a primordial role in designing and implementing the Arabic part of the program. It will also be an active, efficient and responsible center of Arabic language translation. So far, progress has been made in much of the Arabic UNL. An International Corpus of Arabic (ICA) has already been built to enable us to know the contemporary linguistic use of Arabic terms as used in Arab countries. Every word is defined in the corpus by 16 linguistic dimensions.

The ICA holds 60 million words so far, making it the first Arabic language corpus with such specifications that serve Arabic linguistic research. An Arabic dictionary has already been created and currently consists of 140 entries for 80 definitions to be included in the Arabic UNL.

This kind of cooperation and exchange of expertise and ideas is the perfect way to promote dialogue and spread understanding and tolerance between people, and this long-sought dialogue may raise the similarities and differences between cultures and civilizations. For these reasons, the BA aspires to be an arena of dialogue between various civilizations and cultures, through its research centers, projects, and international events.

Words to Remember

"No culture can live, if it attempts to be exclusive."

Mahatma Gandhi

"Culture is the sum of all the forms of art, love, and thought, which have enabled man to be less enslaved."

André Malraux

"The best thing a man can do for his culture when he is rich is to endeavor to carry out those schemes which he entertained when he was poor."

Henry David Thoreau

"Culture is the widening of the mind and of the spirit."

Jawaharlal Nehru

"Culture is an instrument wielded by professors to manufacture professors, who when their turn comes will manufacture professors."

Simone Weil

"Culture is to know the best that has been said and thought in the world."

Matthew Arnold

"You don't have to burn books to destroy a culture. Just get people to stop reading them."

Ray Bradbury

"Debate and divergence of views can only enrich our history and culture."

Ibrahim Babangida

"Whoever controls the media, the images, controls the culture."

Allen Ginsberg

"Vision without power does bring moral elevation but cannot give a lasting culture."

Muhammad Iqbal

"If everybody is looking for it, then nobody is finding it. If we were cultured, we would not be conscious of lacking culture."

Pablo Picasso

"Every man's ability may be strengthened or increased by culture."

John Abbott

"Without culture, and the relative freedom it implies, society, even when perfect, is but a jungle."

Albert Camus

"No people come into possession of a culture without having paid a heavy price for it."

James A. Baldwin

"Everything is arranged so that it be this way, this is what is called culture."

Jacques Derrida