

The Ancient Library of Alexandria.

Ahmed Mansour

It was not only the largest and most important collection of Greek books that ever existed, but, in the days of its greatest glory, it was the greatest library in the entire world before the invention of printing.

Like the **tower of Babel**, Atlantis, or the Holy Grail, the library of Alexandria is one of the great archetypes of our civilization. Since antiquity legions of scholars, novelists, poets, philosophers, artists, or mere dreamers, have fantasized about a blessed place where all human knowledge, all the books of the world, had been collected; have praised the learned men of the Museum for their conquests in every field of culture.

To the Romans it was *Alexandria ad Aegyptum*; Alexandria “near” not “in” Egypt. To them it was a bridge between mystical Egypt and the more pragmatic West.

After **Alexander**’s death in the city of Babylon, **Ptolemy** took his body, which was on its way back to Greece, and diverted it to Alexandria. Ptolemy ascended to the throne of the pharaohs as Ptolemy I Soter, the founder of the Ptolemaic dynasty.

With his complex **Mediterranean** policy, there were good reasons why Ptolemy chose **Alexandria** as his capital, rather than the more traditional capital of Memphis. In the context of the new Hellenistic world, Alexandria, as a port city, looked outwards to the world. Ptolemy felt that his new capital needed its own spiritual center of learning, as a counterweight to ancient Egyptian science and culture, and to that other Greek center of learning, Athens. To fulfill this need, he

established the **Museum** (*Mouseion* in Greek) within the *Basileia* or royal precinct of the city, on the eastern side of Alexandria.

Ptolemy was not only a valorous soldier and an intelligent ruler but also an intellectual and he succeeded in promoting scholarly activity and patronizing creative artists on a measure never seen before. In this way, he provided himself with a political and dynastic link to Alexander and gave the Greek inhabitants of Egypt a cultural connection with their own Greek past. In this context belongs the foundation at Alexandria of the Museum (Temple of the Muses), a cultural community gathering scholars from all over the world.

The Museum

The **Mouseion** was a crucible where the ideas of Hellenic civilization interacted with the mathematical and astronomical knowledge of ancient Egyptian civilization, jealously preserved over the millennia by the Egyptian clergy, but which the Greeks held in high regard. Alexandria and the Mouseion were responsible for a whole series of discoveries, some of which were lost in the following centuries.

Collecting Books

In the fifth century BCE, the Golden Age of Classical Greece, book collecting was still very uncommon. As the fourth century went on, private scroll collections and libraries became more numerous. However, the first recorded public library wasn't until about the time of Alexander the Great. The philosopher **Aristotle**, a man of great learning, who was also Alexander's tutor, had amassed a large personal library encompassing all the arts and sciences of his age. Legend has it that when

the Ptolemies constructed the Great Library at Alexandria, it was arranged according to Aristotle's model of his own personal library.

The Ptolemies could buy Greek scrolls in "book markets" in Athens, Rhodes, and other centers of Greek culture. But the Ptolemies had wealth and single-minded determination. They sent agents out with well-filled purses and orders to buy whatever scrolls they could on every kind of subject—the older the copy the better.

But a more important Peripatetic connection with the Ptolemies is attributed to **Demetrius of Phalerum**, an Athenian who is also thought to provide the link between Aristotle's school and the Museum in Alexandria. Demetrius joined the court of Ptolemy I as he was responsible for collecting books for the Alexandrian library, and he was credited with the initiative of the Greek translation of the Hebrew law.

The Ptolemies order to search every arriving vessel for books, to confiscate any manuscripts, and forced the ship to stay in port until the quick-scribe facility could make a replacement copy for the owner. Demetrius had quickly acquired some 200,000 scrolls. **Callimachus of Cyrene** apparently cataloged more than 500,000 scrolls by about 240 B.C., while another estimate puts the holdings at 700,000 by the time of Julius Caesar, representing a collection history of 250 years.

By his turn, **Ptolemy III** wrote a letter to every king he knew about and asked to borrow their books. When Athens loaned him some classic texts by the poets Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, Ptolemy kept the originals and sent the

copies back to Greece, nonchalantly forfeiting a huge deposit of 870 pounds of gold he had sent.

The collection was more akin to that of a national library than an academic one, and it included varied manuscripts such as cookbooks, works on magic, and books on fishing.

The Ptolemies aimed to make the collection not only a comprehensive repository of Greek writings, but also a tool for research. They also included translations in Greek of important works in other languages. Large numbers of Jews had been encouraged to come to Alexandria. They became thoroughly Hellenized and spoke only Greek, and could no longer understand the original Hebrew or Aramaic, so Ptolemy II gave seventy rabbis the task of translating the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament, known as the Septuagint. This first Greek version of the Hebrew Bible was completed around 130 BCE. Rolls of papyrus were collected in every tongue: Hebrew, Aramaic, Nabataean, Arabic, Indian, and ancient Egyptian. All were translated into Greek.

They also translated the Egyptian History of the famous priest Manetho, who worked at Heliopolis, and from which we obtained the list of dynasties we use today. It must have seemed as if the Ptolemies aimed to collect every book in the world.

Who Was Who? The Director, or Priest of the Muses, which was a very influential position, was appointed by the Ptolemaic rulers, then by the Roman emperors. The first Director of the Great Library was **Zenodotos of Ephesus**. He was also the first to compile a glossary of rare words. He needed staff as well: sorters, checkers,

clerks, pages, copyists, and repairers—and it is likely that a great many of them were slaves.

His successor was **Apollonius of Rhodes**, who composed the famous epic the *Argonautica* and was the tutor of Ptolemy III. Being raised in this intellectual environment ensured that the kings made efforts to seek out talented minds from all over the Greek world and invite them to Alexandria.

It was **Callimachus** of Cyrene who compiled an index of books listing all the titles in the Great Library. However, his greatest achievement was entitled *Tables of Persons in Every Branch of Learning, together with a List of Their Writings* or just *Pinakes*, meaning “Tables.” It was a detailed bibliographical survey of all Greek writings, occupying over 120 books.

The universal scholar **Eratosthenes of Cyrene** came from Athens and became Director of the library (245–205 BCE) after Apollonius of Rhodes. He was also the tutor of Ptolemy IV Philopator. Skilled in astronomy and geography, he calculated the circumference of Earth. He was also a historian and poet.

Aristophanes of Byzantium was Director from 205–185 BCE, and **Aristarchus of Samos** from 175–145 BCE. He calculated the distance from Earth to the Moon and became famous for postulating a heliocentric system where Earth and planets went round the Sun, 1,500 years before Copernicus.

The first physician to come was **Praxagoras of Kos**, who brought the Hippocratic tradition to Alexandria.

His student, **Herophilos of Chalkedon**, was one of the most important doctors in Alexandria. He deduced that the brain, not the heart, was the seat of intelligence, and isolated both the nervous systems and the arterial system.

Euclid, the famous mathematician and geometer, came from the Platonic Academy in Athens to teach in Alexandria.

Archimedes of Syracuse spent some time at Alexandria, as did **Konon of Samos** who is credited with the theory of conic sections.

In the first century CE, **Heron of Alexandria** published various works such as the *Pneumatica*, where he explained how to boil water and channel steam into a pipe, long before James Watt.

The Ptolemies not only sought to be the political leaders of the Greek world; the foundation of the Museum and Library reveals that they also sought to be the cultural leaders. Being cultural leaders was a reflection of their aspiration to political leadership. The scholars of Alexandria came from all over the Ptolemaic Empire and beyond. Eratosthenes and Callimachus came from Cyrene, Aristophanes from Byzantium, Philitas from Cos, and Theocritus from as far afield as Syracuse. So just as the Ptolemies sought to establish control over other Greek states, so they also sought to establish control over Greek culture.

They opened up the cultures of the world, established a true dialogue of civilizations. Together these scholars promoted rationality, tolerance and understanding and organized universal knowledge. For over six centuries the ancient Library of Alexandria epitomized the zenith of learning, as later scholars,

such Claudius Ptolemy and Dioscoredes built on that explosion of knowledge and added their contributions.

To this day it symbolizes the noblest aspirations of the human mind, global ecumenism, and the greatest achievements of the intellect. The library completely disappeared over sixteen hundred years ago... but it continues to inspire scientists and scholars everywhere.

The Library disappeared slowly, suffering a slow decline from the time of Caesar and Cleopatra. Thus by 400 A.D. the Library had vanished, and the era of Alexandrian scholarship came to an end a few years later. It had thus disappeared over two centuries before the arrival of the Muslim Arab armies in 641 AD.

But the memory of the ancient Library of Alexandria lived on. It continued to inspire scholars and humanists everywhere. Many dreamt of one day reviving the great Library.

In 1974 it was decided to build a new library in the city, the *Bibliotheca Alexandrina*. With UNESCO backing, the work of creating the new library was started in 1988 and the complex was officially inaugurated in 2002.

The New Bibliotheca Alexandrina

It is dedicated to recapture the spirit of openness and scholarship of the original Bibliotheca Alexandrina. It is much more than a library. It contains:

The New Library of Alexandria, the New Bibliotheca Alexandrina is dedicated to recapture the spirit of openness and scholarship of the original Bibliotheca Alexandrina. It is much more than a library. It contains:

- **A Library** that can hold **millions of books**, newspapers and periodicals in all fields and in different languages.
- **An Internet Archive**

The Internet Archive (IA) is a recorded memory of the all the web pages on every website on the Internet since it started in 1996.

- **Super Computer**

Performs trillions of calculations per second.

- **Seven specialized libraries** for
 1. The visually impaired

The Taha Hussein Library (TH) offers a new approach in library services for the blind and visually impaired. Equipped with special software, that makes it possible for its users to read books and journals, and access all the resources of the library as well as selected web resources.

2. Arts, multimedia and audio-visual materials

The Arts and Multimedia Library holds a rich print and audiovisual collection pertaining to the Arts.

3. Children

The Children's Library (CH) provides educational, recreational and cultural resources for children aged 6 to 11.

1. Young

The Young People's Library (YP) opens up a vast world of knowledge, entertainment and culture for young people aged 12 to 16. The YP introduces its visitors to modern information technology, develops their reading and research skills and encourages social interaction.

2. Microforms

Microform is an appropriate medium for the preservation of rare manuscripts, printed materials and documents against potential loss or damage resulting from excessive circulation and age, not to mention increasing their accessibility and circulation without direct contact with the originals.

3. Rare books and Special collections

Rare collections cover all remarkable, unique items within the BA's holdings including: original manuscripts, early printed books, maps, antique coins, celebrities' personal effects, exceptional donations presented to the Library, momentous documents and other rarities.

4. Francophone Library

The Francophone Library is formed following the exceptional gift from the French National Library (BnF) to the BA. The gift is a collection of 500,000 French books published between 1996 and 2006 in different fields. Accordingly, the BA became the fourth largest francophone library in the world with the biggest collection of French books outside France

- **Four Museums for**

1. Antiquities

The extraordinary idea of housing a museum of antiquities within the cultural complex of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina was born when several exquisite pieces dating back to the Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine eras were discovered during the excavation works at the construction site of the Library. The BA Antiquities Museum is one of the few museums in the world that displays artifacts discovered at the self-same location of the museum.

2. Manuscripts

This Museum houses around 120 manuscripts and rare books in a multitude of languages including Arabic and Latin.

3. Sadat

The Museum features a number of honors and decorations awarded to the late president of Egypt Sadat by other countries during various stages of his life, in addition to a number of gold, silver, bronze, and copper plates that he and Mrs. Gihan El-Sadat received as gifts. The Museum displays a number of medals, and a collection of President Sadat's civilian and military suits, most important of which is the blood-stained military suit he was wearing on the day of his assassination on 6 October 1981.

4. The History of Science

Highlighting the historical aspect of science in Egypt during three major eras: Egypt of the Pharaohs, Hellenistic Alexandria and the Arab-Islamic Middle Ages.

- **A Planetarium**

The Planetarium Science Center (PSC) is an ideal place to enjoy a day of fun learning. It is an independent, not-for-profit educational foundation dedicated to increasing the public's awareness, interest and understanding of science and technology through entertainment.

- **Culturama**: a cultural panorama over nine screens, the first ever patented 9-projector interactive system. Winner of many awards, the Culturama, developed by **CULTNAT**, allows the presentation of a wealth of data layers, where the presenter can click on an item and go to a new level of detail.
- **VISTA** (The Virtual Immersive Science and Technology Applications system) is an interactive Virtual Reality environment, allowing researchers to transform two-dimensional data sets into 3-D simulations, and to step inside them.

- **Fifteen permanent exhibitions** covering
 1. Impressions of Alexandria: The Awad Collection

It is a collection of original engravings, lithographs and maps that reveal artists' and travelers', impressions of Alexandria from the 15th to the 19th centuries. It also includes rare photographs of the city from the early 19th century to the mid-20th century, and highlights the cultural life in the cosmopolitan city as portrayed by its prominent writers and artists.

2. The World of Shadi Abdel Salam

Shadi Abdel Salam (1930 -1986) was a distinguished artist and an internationally acclaimed filmmaker. He was a highly creative designer of set decorations and costumes, as well as a screenwriter and director. His work reflects a unique vision of the ancient Egyptian culture as well as Islamic and Coptic heritage.

3. Mohamed and Kamel Ibrahim Exhibition for Arabic Calligraphy

Artist Mohamed Ibrahim is one of the pioneers of Arabic calligraphy in Egypt and the Arab world. Together with his brother, Artist Kamel Ibrahim, they established one of the most prominent calligraphy schools: Mohamed and Kamel Ibrahim School for Arabic Calligraphy in Alexandria. Their whole lives were dedicated to raising awareness and preserving the heritage of Arabic calligraphy.

4. The History of Printing

The exhibition contains the old machines of the Bulaq Press, the first Egyptian press. Visitors can see, on display, a great number of the old printing presses and their accessories, such as character assembly machines, in addition to samples of printed material.

5. Arab-Muslim Medieval Instruments of Astronomy and Science (Star Riders), and the Permanent Exhibitions of Selections of Contemporary Egyptian Art:

One of the BA unique exhibitions, the Arab-Muslim Medieval Instruments of Astronomy and Science Exhibition highlights the priceless contributions of the Arabs to science in general, and astronomy in particular.

- **A Conference Center** for thousands of persons.

The Bibliotheca Alexandrina Conference Center (BACC) is a state-of-the-art meeting and exhibition facility and is an integral part of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina complex.

It houses four conference halls, four meeting rooms, two exhibition halls, a VIP lounge and a VIP meeting room, three restaurants and a coffee shop.

- **Digital Laboratory**

What is DAR?

The Digital Assets Repository (DAR) is an eco-system of components developed by the International School of Information Science (ISIS) at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina (BA) to create an institutional repository maintaining the Library's digital collections. DAR accommodates and archives any media type due to its flexible architecture. Moreover, it provides public access to digitized collections through a web-based search and browsing facility.

- **Eight Academic Research Centers:**
 - Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Center (Alex-Med)

The Alexandria and Mediterranean Research Center (Alex Med) documents and researches the tangible and intangible heritage of Alexandria and the Mediterranean, whilst aiming to promote dialogue and exchange in the region.

- Arts Center

The Arts Center supports high profile international contemporary arts from all backgrounds, as well as Egyptian contemporary art.

- Center for Special Studies and Programs (CSSP)

The CSSP is an independent scientific non-profit institution affiliated to the BA. The CSSP seeks out a generation of creative and innovative researchers through Research Grant programs, and recognizes the existence of a pool of untapped potential available in young researchers all over Egypt, who are eager to

collaborate with international institutions, but who lack the process needed for such collaboration.

- International School of Information Studies (ISIS)

The International School of Information Science (ISIS) is a research institute affiliated to the BA. It acts as an incubator for digital and technological projects, thus promoting and nurturing innovations that encompass the spirit of the BA's mission.

- Manuscript Center

The Manuscript Center's work revolves around the preservation, digitization, and management of heritage. In the Restoration Lab, almost 25000 papers and about 200 manuscripts and rare books have been restored.

- Center for the Documentation of Cultural and Natural Heritage (CultNat, located in Cairo)

The Center aims at applying the latest technological innovations to document Egypt's cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, as well as Egypt's natural heritage which includes information about the natural areas and their biological components.

- Alexandria Center for Hellenistic Studies

It was established as a joint collaboration between the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the Onassis Foundation, the Vardinoyannis Foundation and the University of Alexandria. Graduates of departments of Classics or Archeology may apply for the Masters directly. Non-specialized students will take a one year qualifying Diploma, which qualifies candidates to apply for a Master's degree. The Center is open to scholars from around the world who are keen to obtain diplomas, Masters and Doctorates in Hellenistic studies in particular, from the departments of History, Literature, Art, Archeology and Architecture, and Philosophy and Science.

- Calligraphy Center

Its purpose is to study inscriptions, calligraphies and writings in the world throughout the ages, from the pre-dynastic period up to the digital age. Calligraphy and writing are essential for the understanding of human knowledge and the evolution of civilizations. The archaeological discoveries of the 19th century and

the deciphering of the Ancient Egyptian language have unraveled the mysteries of this ancient civilization.

Objectives of the Center:

- Studying the origins of writing
- Researching how writing originated and developed
- Studying the emergence and disappearance of alphabets
- Exploring connections between scripts of different civilizations
- Conducting comparative studies between different scripts
- Promoting calligraphy aesthetics as a form of sublime artistic expression
- Studying the relationship between calligraphy and modern technology.

Projects:

Publications

1) **Abgadiyat** is a scientific refereed journal issued by the Calligraphy Center affiliated to Bibliotheca Alexandrina. The Journal bears an Arabic name, that means ‘Alphabets’.

The scope of Abgadiyat covers specific works, dedicated to the research, study, documentation, conservation and interpretation of the writings, calligraphies, and inscriptions in the world throughout the world.

2) **Translated Monographs:**

The Calligraphy Center had translated 8 translated books, among them:

a) **History of Writing From Ideogram to Multimedia**
by Anne-Marie Christine, (translated into Arabic)

This magnificent volume deals with all the systems of writing all over the world from ancient to modern times. Each chapter contains a peculiar region of the world and sheds favorable lights on the various elements which played roles in the creation of its culture and writing. In 2006, the Calligraphy Center was awarded the Best Book Prize for the Arabic translation of the History of Writing from Ideogram to Multimedia, from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science in the field of Arts, Literature and Humanities.

b) Lost Languages (The Enigma of The World's Undeciphered Scripts), Andrew Robinson.

The book investigates the most famous examples, leading us back to a far-distant past obscured by the ravages of time and haunted by code breakers hungry for glory.

c) Reading the Maya Glyphs, Michael D. Coe., Mark Van Stone

It is one of our very latest publications. The deciphering of Maya hieroglyphic writing either listed on the monuments, or written in the manuscripts, or painted or carved on ceramics, can be read easily with some confidence now.

3) Center Series Study

It is a refereed scientific series, aiming at publishing specialized books and volumes that deal with the studies of inscriptions and calligraphies all over the world, starting from the prehistoric period up to the digital age.

The Calligraphy Center had published 10 books related to the subject of inscriptions among them:

1) The Fatimide inscriptions and writings on the architectural monuments (968/1171-358/567).

Archaeological and artistic study, by Dr. Farag Hussein Farag

This thesis aims at studying the Fatimide writings and inscriptions in an archaeological and artistic prospect. This book has been awarded the Best Book Award 2008 at the 16th session of the Competition organized by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

2) Mauritanian Rock Art: A New Recording

Dr. Hamdi Abbas Ahmed Abd-El-Moneim

It is an attempt to utilize new methods and techniques for recording rock art in north-west Africa. The main aim of this book is three-fold: to bring attention to the

Mauritanian rock art which has received little attention compared with the rock art of other parts of the Saharan zone; to make a new recording of this corpus with special emphasis on a number of elements that previous work either ignored or omitted; and to carry out two different interpretative analyses in order to gain a better understanding of the recorded corpus (as an example of the Mauritanian rock art).

3) NecropolesMemphiticae inscriptions from the Herakleopolitan period.

by Dr. KhaledDawoud

“The core of the thesis is the compilation and study of a group of monuments, many are published for the first time and difficult of access. These are presented with a brief general survey of the sites of known archaeological contexts of the monuments.

~~4) Cryptography in Ancient Egypt~~

~~This study deals with the origin and development of Cryptography in Ancient Egypt up until the Late Period. It consists of an introduction and four main parts: Part One, Introduction; Part Two, Cryptography in Ancient Egypt; Part Three, some samples of Cryptography in Ancient Egypt throughout the ages; and finally Part Four, specializes in scarabs and the cryptographic writing.~~

Research Annals

The Calligraphy Center had four books in the field of the Research Annals, among them:

Al-Busiri Mosque

Sharaf al Din Al-Busiri was considered one of the greatest poets of the seventh century of *Hijra*. His poetry mainly described and criticized the social corruption that was rampant during his time. Al-Busiri's Mosque is unique among other mosques in Alexandria because of the richness of its walls with inscriptions and old engravings, including verses from Al-Burda.

Journey of Writing in Egypt

This publication explores how the writings developed in Egypt, displaying the different phases of inventing and evolution of writings in Egypt. It also targets different cohorts aiming to increase the culture awareness in the community. The publication contains 18 articles written by eminent scholars in their field. It covers the historical framework of the development of writings on the land of Egypt.

The Digital Library of Inscriptions: Documentation and preservation of heritage

This system was originally developed to document scripts written on the Pharaonic, Greek, Coptic and Islamic monuments of Alexandria, including pictures, transliterations and translations, with the intention of making them freely available in a web-based searchable form. The project's scope was gradually broadened to include scripts from other national monuments, and then to include those from any monument in the world. The new scope of the project focuses on the types of inscriptions rather than the historical eras in which they were created, and it is according to these types that the data will be classified. Twelve inscription types were initially defined: Arabic, Persian, Coptic, Demotic, Greek, Hieratic, Hieroglyphic, and Turkish.

This is the first endeavor of its kind, and yet the Digital Library of Inscriptions has the potential of becoming a widely utilized resource. The project will give people around the world, whether specialized or not, access to all kinds of historical inscriptions and will help preserve the inscriptions for future generations, regardless of what becomes of the original monuments.

Permanent Exhibition

Mohamed and Kamel Ibrahim Exhibition

In honor of their achievements, the Library established a permanent exhibition for their art works and published a catalog of their magnificent drawings, which can be used as a guide book for the exhibition.

Temporary Exhibitions

The Calligraphy Center had hosted 7 Temporary Exhibitions

Among them:

KhudairAlborsaidy Exhibition

An exhibition of artist KhudairAlborsaidy of Arabic Calligraphy which is organized by the Calligraphy Center in the frame work of its cultural activities was held in Bibliotheca Alexandrina Conference Center, 18-25 October 2009.

The exhibition of the artist KhudairAlborsaidy contains a number of configurations and designs that distinguish the art of Arabic calligraphy, and full of innovative forms of visions.

Shodo and Arabic Calligraphy Exhibition

Arab and Japanese calligraphers participated in the exhibition, which displayed paintings of Japanese script in different shapes such as natural phenomenon and ancient Japanese shapes, especially that the traditional paper indicates the smoothness and easy flow of the calligraphy.

Rhythm and Verses Exhibition

Rhythm and Verses is a visiting exhibition. It ventures into the manner due to its magnificent tablets which shows the beauty and delicacy of the scripts. The Exhibition was in cooperation with Islamic Arts Museum Malaysia (IAMM).

It sheds light on a distinguished collection of Persian single folios produced from the 16th to the 19th century CE. These folios are considered to be the best achievement of the Islamic civilization.

Conferences:

Since 2003, the Calligraphy Center had succeeded in organizing 10 Conferences bearing different subjects and themes.

1) The Calligraphy Center is organizing an **International Forum of Calligraphy, Writing and Inscriptions in the World throughout the Ages** every two successive years. This has been started since 2003 by the First Forum, and by 2012 we had reached to the Fifth International Forum of “History of Writings, Calligraphies, and Inscriptions in the World throughout the Ages which had taken place on the 16–18 October 2012. It's Theme was about ‘The Inscriptions and Writings in the Cities and Deserts of North Africa’

2) **The Fourth International Symposium Printing and Publishing in the Language and Countries of the Middle East- 27–29 September 2011**

Following two successful international symposia on The History of Printing and Publishing in the Languages and Countries of the Middle East, held at the Gutenberg Museum in Mainz (2002), at the Bibliothèque nationale de France in Paris (2005) and at Universität Leipzig in Germany (2008), The Calligraphy Center had organized the fourth meeting on the same themes. This Symposium was confined to printing in Arabic and Muslim languages, and covered a range of Middle Eastern languages and scripts.

3) **Coptic Studies Conference- Life in Egypt during the Coptic Period (Towns and Villages, Laymen and Clergy, Bishops and Dioceses)**

28-30 September 2010, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Egypt

This conference is the first of its kind to be held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. Its main themes deal with life in ancient Egypt during the Coptic period. The conference discussed the different aspects of the Egyptian society and history.

4) **The Ancient Egyptian Calligraphy Conference**

24-26 April 2004

The Conference aimed at studying the Ancient Egyptian calligraphy of the world. Within this framework, it covered the study of calligraphy according to a certain axis.

5) The Forth Coming Conference is

The Eleventh International Congress of Egyptologists.

Egyptologists from all countries are cordially invited to participate in the Eleventh International Congress of Egyptologists, which will be held in Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria, Egypt, from 13th to 20th September 2013.

Workshops

1) Hieroglyphic Workshops

The Calligraphy Center at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina offers non-specialized courses to juniors as well as adults to study the ancient Egyptian language. These courses aim at spreading historical, cultural and archeological awareness and introducing Egyptology.

2) Arabic Calligraphy Workshops

One of the goals of the Research and Publishing Unit in the Calligraphy Center is to draw attention to the importance of studying study Arabic calligraphy in schools and universities. It also aims to improve the Arabic calligraphy of young people.

Prizes and Awards

- Dr. Khaled Azab, and Dr. Ahmed Mansour, were awarded the State Incentive Award in Social Sciences for the Bulaq Press publication.
- Fatimid Inscriptions, by Dr. Farag Hussein Farag, published by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, has been awarded the Best Book Award 2008 at the 16th session of the Competition organized by the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- The Calligraphy Center was awarded the Best Book Prize from the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science in the field of Arts, Literature and Humanities, for the translation into Arabic of History of Writing from Ideogram to Multimedia.

Finally, The Bibliotheca Alexandrina constitutes a part of the future with all its diverse scientific departments. It has been and will continue a center of knowledge dissemination and for dialogue between cultures and tolerance for the entire globe.