

The Report on the Survey on Children's  
Literature and the Promotion of  
Reading among Children  
In the Arab Republic of Egypt

Information and Research Centre  
King Hussein Ben Talal Foundation

October 2007

## **Introduction:**

### **Official Policies**

Interest in publishing and reading in the Arab Republic of Egypt began towards the end of the Nineteenth Century when dār al-kutub (The House of Books) was established in the year 1870. The Arabic Language Academy was established on 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1932. This reflects a clear cultural policy trend from the days of the Monarchy to our present day for support of the publishing industry and encouraging reading along all facets, the writer, and publisher, distributor and book market.

The book has remained a pillar of Egyptian cultural policy regardless of the differences or successive changes in the political and social contexts of Egypt. The Public Authority for Publishing was established in 1971 and interest was constant in institutionalizing publishing and enabling access to books. Presently, the Public Authority for Books issues books and periodicals as basic official references and undertakes a number of projects of great importance, insofar as they have local and regional reflections, for there are the following projects under the umbrella of the Authority:

- 1- The National Project for Translation which has printed around 630 translated books.
- 2- The organization of the International Book Exhibition in Cairo with the participation of 100 states; the organization of parallel cultural activities.
- 3- The Campaign of “Reading for All” and the Family Library which is a national campaign aiming at encouraging reading among children and adults. The Campaign is organized by the Integrated Care Society in cooperation with the cultural entities concerned, ministries, Governorates and societies. The Project for the Family Library has produced 2,600 titles of which 40,000 copies have been printed.
- 4- Public libraries are established through the Fund for Cultural Development which has so far supported the establishment of 40 libraries in marginalized areas.

Although there is no written cultural policy allocated for encouraging children's literature, the public discourse and the achievements so far realized with strong political support and momentum from Egypt's First Lady, "the virtuous Mrs. Suzan Mubarak" are evident and obvious in respect of this field. Since the eighties and until our present day, a strong movement has emerged for the establishment of children's libraries and activating the trend for free reading among children, both in school libraries and outside them. This movement has been adopted by the Integrated Care Society which is chaired by the First Lady.

Interest has not been restricted to this dimension but has taken a wider sectorial form as, in addition to the Integrated Care Society, there is involvement by state institutions, centers and many authorities of the Egyptian Ministry of Culture, the most important of which is the National Center for Child Culture<sup>1</sup>. Additionally, a sectorial pattern has been adopted through the public discourse for the promotion of reading by children in cultural, entertainment and information programs.

### **The Role of the Private Sector (A Historic Summary):-**

The role of the private sector in the process of spreading children's books has been concomitant with Egyptian State policy since the days of the Monarchy to date. Dār al-hilāl, established by Jurji Zeidan in 1982 with financing from the private sector at that time, was one of the first private institutions to publish children's books and magazines as from 1912 and is still pursuing that role today. These magazines such as *Samīr* and *al-hilāl* book for boys and girls ...etc. have become part of the child's culture; indeed children's books and magazines occupy the leading positions of its sales. Last year, this institution celebrated the 115<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its establishment.

The private sector, such as dār al-hilāl, was not satisfied with the traditional publishing of children's books but has started since 2006 the following projects:

---

<sup>1</sup> Initiative and Achievement: The educational context of works that have won the Suzan Mubarak Prize during the period 1998-2001, the Higher Council for Culture, "The National Center for Child Culture".

- A- Printing books on CDs by agreement with the Authority of Communications in order to facilitate access to books by all tranches of society and reprint old publications of the institution.
- B- Cooperation with the Center for Manuscripts in the Alexandria Library with the aim of issuing a complete digital copy of *AL Hilal* magazine editions and its manuscripts as it is one of the oldest magazines in the Arab World.

It is worth mentioning that dār al-hilāl is independent financially but is subject to the Higher Council for Culture in respect of supervision. Thus it is possible to say that the State is the larger umbrella which provides books for children from the point of view of laying the necessary infrastructure, publishing or distribution.

### **Institutions That Encourage Reading in the Arab Republic of Egypt**

The policy for supporting books and encouraging reading is implemented directly through two Authorities under the Ministry of Culture in Egypt.

**First:** The Public Authority for the Culture Palaces undertakes the following:

- a- Producing printed material and supervising the Palace of Child Culture;
- b- Child management.

**Second:** The National Council for Child Culture.

As to the institutions that deal directly by offering services for publishing, production and distribution, both for children and adults, they include the following parties:

- 1- The Public Egyptian Authority for Books;
- 2- The Higher Council for Culture;
- 3- The Egyptian Society for Children's Right to Play;
- 4- The Egyptian Council for Children's Books;
- 5- The Public Authority for Culture Palaces;
- 6- The Integrated Care Society;
- 7- The Fund for Cultural Development.

It is also worth mentioning that there is a research unit under the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood which is

concerned with childhood policies in the Arab Republic of Egypt on a sectorial basis. At Halwan University, there is a documentation and research center allocated for children's literature and reporting to the Directorate General of Libraries. It is a special workshop for children's literature and undertakes the following tasks<sup>2</sup>:

**1- Compiling and Documentation, including:**

- Safekeeping files of information on authors, art drawers and publishers;
- And researchers...etc, who have a connection with children's literature;
- Compiling selected samples of children's literature in its various printed and mechanically read forms from the three levels, local, Arab and universal.
- The technical preparation for these compilations and the preparation of the bibliographies relevant to them, whether traditional or electronic, current or past, comprehensive or selective, in respect of specific objective aspects.

**2- Study and Research, including:**

- Assisting researchers of children's literature at universities, institutes and research centers, at Halwan University and outside it, in the course of preparing their specialized research in this field and aiding the publishing of said research;
- Monitoring and analyzing reading trends among children and youths in the local environment (Halwan and neighbouring areas) or on a larger scale (the Governorate of Cairo) and the other Governorates;
- Answering questions put forward on children's literature by those concerned with this field such as: library custodians, teachers, social specialists and supervisors of child centers..etc;
- Organizing seminars, training courses and study circles allocated for the producers and beneficiaries of children's literature.

**3- The Information Task:**

---

<sup>2</sup> The source: The library of the Arab Publishers' Association – Jordan Branch.

- The workshop deals with various media means, radio, television, journalism, video programs..etc. in determining children's literature suitable for use in these various means;
- It works towards the establishment of a professional relation with the parties and authorities specialized and having common interest in subjects connected with children's literature, at the local, Arab and universal levels;
- It produces and makes available booklets, posters and other material introducing children's literature and its various utilizations.

Additionally, it establishes cultural relations and follows the activities offered in children's and youth's sections of large public libraries such as the Alexandria Library, al-Ma'ādī Library, the Grand Cairo Library and the Public Mubarak Library.

As to what pertains to children's literature, there are general trends particular to the parties that produce or supervise children's literature. It is noticeable that there are no clear documented plans (meaning strategies) allocated for the age group which is the subject of this study. Furthermore, the research team could not obtain specific budgets allotted to these institutions but we have been provided with achievements instead of the plans of the past years and the present.

## Teaching

Teaching is obligatory for children aged 6 years to 14 years. Early childhood starts from 4-5 years. In compliance with Law No. 82 for the year 2006, the State established the National Authority for Guaranteeing the Quality and Reliability of teaching. This was done in the course of preparing the strategy for the years 2011/12 for the reform of teaching and making it suitable to students' needs and advanced teaching systems. It is noticed that **effective teaching** was included in the framework of developing pre-school teaching. This leads to the rooting of concepts in the Elementary Stage and, accordingly, increasing the ability to read and write during elementary teaching. It will additionally lead to added quality through enhancing

the activities which support the child's mental and moral growth while guaranteeing his right to play and enjoy.

The Ministry of Education also adopted a standardized bibliographic list of the books selected for school libraries for the various educational stages. A total of 927 books were included for the Elementary and Preparatory Stages covering the following subjects: general education, philosophy and sciences, religions, social sciences, languages, pure sciences, applied sciences, arts, the literature of languages, geography, biographies and history<sup>3</sup>. In the kindergarten stage, the number of books was 55 and children in special education forms were allotted 47 books. Until 2004, the number of obligatory schools in Egypt had reached 37,257 schools teaching 3,085,148 students.

By reverting to ex-curriculum books, the existence of a bibliography concerned with children's and youth's reading is not something new as it has been available in the list of school libraries since 1965 and was updated in 1996. However, **the major problem pointed out by teachers in the Ministry of Education lies in the preparation of librarians and library supervisors at schools due to the scarcity of the cadres qualified to undertake this task, especially that old schools are rented, the elementary ones in particular, and have small areas that contain no library but book shelves instead<sup>4</sup>.**

Those in charge of libraries, females and males, are graduates with a B.A. degree in Literature employed per limited contracts. In elementary and special education classes, they are specialized with high qualification. There are specialists with educational diplomas, two for each school with more than twenty forms. The general trend is to transform reading into a more interactive process through printing books on CDs and through employment of the Internet.

Within the framework of school efforts for encouraging reading, the following activities are undertaken at national level:

---

<sup>3</sup> The source: The standardized bibliographic list of books selected for school libraries, the Ministry of Education, January, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Professor Mrs. Abdul-Rahman, the Egyptian Ministry of Education.

- 1- A camp with the title 'iqra' (Read) including workshops on reading and an information archive at Governorate level;
- 2- A workshop on the "Book Club".

Where by all workshops are undertaken periodically.

The research team, however, could not obtain information about the number of trainees, their age groups and the effect of this training on their capabilities in the field of reading.

In summation, the dissemination of reading among children and enabling them to have access to it in Egypt are cross sectorial functions led by the Ministry of Culture in cooperation with the Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Education in compliance with **UNESCO** criteria.

## **Universities and Academics**

In addition to the specialized Halwan research workshop, teaching children's literature is undertaken within the curriculum for a B.A. degree in Literature, Documents and Libraries section, in all universities not as a separate subject. However, the interviews made by the research team indicated the presence of an institute specialized in childhood studies at the University of 'Ain Shams with a B.A. graduate degree.

The research team did not have the opportunity to ascertain these information and courses because schools and universities were closed when the field research was conducted.

### **A Brief of Modern Public Libraries in Egypt:-<sup>5</sup>**

The establishment of public libraries in modern Egypt goes back to the Nineteenth Century when al-kutubkhānā al-khudaywiyya {dār al-kutub al-miṣriyya (The Egyptian Book Institute)} was established in March, 1870. The library of the Alexandria Municipality (presently the Governorate of Alexandria) was established in 1889.

Since the forties of the Twentieth Century, branches of the Egyptian Book Institute have been established in various quarters

---

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.arabcin.net>.



of Cairo. The oldest of these is the one of 1948 in Shubra and al-Bārūdī. Public library services until the end of the fifties were extended to citizens in some cities and villages outside Cairo. Most public libraries in cities were under either the municipal councils or county boards. Villages used to have the libraries of collective units which have since disappeared. After the mid-sixties, the Ministry of Culture began establishing culture palaces and homes. The organization of these cultural sites stipulated that each of them should have a library offering general service to the public. In addition to these libraries, a number of independent public libraries were established in some villages that had no cultural center. In 1970, a movement for reorganizing public libraries and establishing central libraries started across the State (except for those under the Ministry of Culture) and were made subordinate to the Institute of Books and National Documents in Cairo. In the late eighties, the Directorates of Youth and Sports in the various Governorates started to offer public library services within the activities undertaken by youth centers in cities and villages. In the nineties, a new movement for the establishment of public libraries took on a new active turn, especially in Cairo, with reliance on the most modern technological methods and means and assistance from governmental, private and foreign entities.

### **The Number of Libraries in Egypt:-**

The Guide of Egyptian Public, Specialized and Academic Libraries, issued by the Center of Information and Support of Decision Making subordinate to the Cabinet of Ministers indicates the existence of 562 Egyptian public libraries out of a total of 1,060 libraries in Egypt, other than school and kindergarten libraries.

### **The Legal Status of Libraries in Egypt:-**

Public libraries in Egypt are subordinate to many parties as will become evident later. The laws on which the emergence of these libraries was based can be listed as follows:-

The Public Authority for the Institute of Books and National Documents was established by Presidential Decree No. 176 for 1993 with a view to disseminate culture among citizens by

facilitating their access to the intellectual, literary and scientific output of the human culture, spreading and delivering library services. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1986 the Egyptian Society for Libraries and Information was proclaimed by the Ministry of Social Affairs under No. (808) Jiza. The Board of Directors was elected with Dr. Professor Mahmūd al-Shunayṭī as Chairman (he is the elder of Arab librarians).

The authorities supervising public libraries in Egypt can be listed as follows:-

- The Ministry of Culture;
- The Public Authority for the Institute of Books and National Documents (the branches of dār al-kutub in the quarters of Cairo and elsewhere such as the Zeitūn Public Library);
- The Public Authority for Culture Palaces (the libraries of culture palaces and homes such as the Library of the Culture Home of Abshwāy in al-Fayyūm);
- The Fund for Cultural Development (some new public libraries such as the Mubarak Public Library);
- The Ministry of Local Administration (the libraries under city and Governorate councils such as the Library of al-Maḥalla Municipality and the Library of the General Secretariat of the Governorate of al-Fayyūm);
- The Higher Council for the Care of Youth and Sports (the libraries of youth centers and sports clubs such as the Library of the Ṭūkh Youth Center);
- The Ministry of Information, the Public Authority for Enquiries (such as the Library of the Nile Center for Information in Benī Swaif and Shbīn al-Kōm);
- The Ministry of Education (the libraries of the Directorates General in some Governorates such as the Governorate of al-Sharqiyya and the Governorate of al-Manūfiyyah).

**Note:-**

- 1- To the previous national effort, we can add the libraries of foreign cultural centers which offer public library services in some Egyptian cities such as the library of the British Cultural Council in Cairo. There are as well some libraries belonging to

- regional entities such as the library of the Regional Center to Teach Adults in the Arab World, located in Surs al-Layyān in al-Manūfiyyah;
- 2- There is no comprehensive legislation that guarantees the just distribution of library services to all parts of the State and which governs the efflux of these services in a practical and efficient way. This has resulted in public library services being unavailable in some towns (like the town of 'Awlād Ṣaqr in al-Sharqiyyah and some quarters of Alexandria like al-'Āmiriyyah and al-Muntazah). Additionally, not too small a percentage of villages and remote areas are deprived of these services (more than 80% of the countryside of al-Sharqiyyah Governorate does not enjoy public library services). There are some groups which do not enjoy sufficient public library services although they are in urgent need for them such as the handicapped, prisoners, hospital patients and inhabitants of remote areas far removed from development;
  - 3- The absence of criteria and standard specifications to which public libraries in Egypt can resort for guidance in order to guarantee the provision of the minimum elements of a sufficient and effective public library service;
  - 4- The shortage of financial potential has led to meager budgets or financial allocations for libraries resulting in :
    - Privation in the information sources available in libraries and the restriction of most of them to a limited number of books. This has in turn reflected in weak demand for reading and on reading programs on the one hand and, on the other, a lack of encouragement to the local publishing market to publish more books of a general cultural nature;
    - A shortage in the number of qualified library custodians able to manage work and activities effectively in libraries. Most graduates turn for work at university libraries and specialized information centers all of which offer better work opportunities to their employees;
    - The limited services offered by public libraries and their restriction to in-house review, external lending and some cultural activities.

**- The Geographic Distribution of Public Libraries  
in Egypt:-<sup>6</sup>**  
**Schedule No. (1), Information on the various public  
libraries in Egypt**

Library Name	Telephone & Fax Nos.	Email Address
Library of the Cultural Club, established 1987, 6 <sup>th</sup> October Street, near al-Zahra' Police Station	T- 2983200 F- 2983200	<a href="mailto:ics_club@yahoo.com">ics_club@yahoo.com</a>
Library al-Bahr al-Azam, established 1989, al-Baher al-Azam Street, near al-Jiza Police Station	T- 5739932 F- 5739932	<a href="mailto:ics_baher@yahoo.com">ics_baher@yahoo.com</a>
Library Khalid Bin al-Waleed, established 1991, Kit Kat Plaza, Ambaba	T- 3118950 F- 3118950	<a href="mailto:ics_khaled@yahoo.com">ics_khaled@yahoo.com</a>
Suzan Mubarak Library, established 1992, 6 <sup>th</sup> October Garden, al-‘Ajouza, Dr. Shaheen Street	T- 3369448 F- 3369448	<a href="mailto:ics_souzan@yahoo.com">ics_souzan@yahoo.com</a>
Shubra al-Khaimah Library, established 1982, Al-Muahada Plaza, 1 <sup>st</sup> May Street, near Mustard Bridge	T- 2216666 F- 2216666	<a href="mailto:ics_shobra2003@yahoo.com">ics_shobra2003@yahoo.com</a>
Al-Maadi Library, established 1997, 2 Al-Nasr Street, in front of the Olympic Center, Al-Maadi	T- 7548541/2/3 F- 7548545	<a href="mailto:info@maadilib.org.eg">info@maadilib.org.eg</a>
Library of the Cultural Child Center, established 1997, 42 Crossing Abdulla Darraz Street with Al-Thawra Street – Misr al-Jadida	T- F- 4179821	<a href="mailto:ics_culture@yahoo.com">ics_culture@yahoo.com</a>

**Library Services Offered to Children:-<sup>7</sup>**

Library services to children are among the fundamental services that ought to be provided and made available to every child. Many states are concerned to spread and expand the scope of children's libraries as they are considered to be at once teaching and

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.sis.gov.eg/Ar/Society>

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.arabcin.net/arabiaall/1-2002/14.html>

educational institutions. Institutions offering library services to children are of three types:-

**- Public Libraries:-**

Their services are extended to children from the view point that a public library is a public service instrument employed by the State in favour of all of its children, young and grown up. That can be through a section in the library allocated for children or through a library fully dedicated to children.

**- School Libraries in the Elementary Stage:-**

Their services are offered to the children who are receiving their formal education in this Elementary Stage. The school library can have an effective role in raising the children and in their educational process, also in enabling them to acquire the skills of self-development.

**- Private Entities of Various Types:-**

There are many such private entities which offer various services to children including library services. Usually, this occurs in societies established for the purpose of serving childhood or in libraries and other institutions such as sports and social clubs and the like.

**Programs and Projects Addressed to Children's literature and Encouraging reading in Egypt:-**<sup>8</sup>

**Case Study (1): The National Campaign of "Reading for All":-**

The project represented in the National Campaign of "Reading for All", announced by Mrs. Suzan Mubarak in the year 1991, is considered one of the most important activities addressed to children and concentrated on encouraging reading. This project entailed the implementation of a number of activities represented by the following:-

1. The issue of the Ministry of Education's Directory for the festival "Reading for All". This Directory included the Ministry's plan addressed to school libraries and library custodians;
2. Holding study sessions and seminars;

---

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.sis.gov.eg>

3. Executing the international seminar, in Cairo in 1992, under the title of “The Future Horizons” about “Reading for All” under comprehensive sponsorship by the Egyptian Section of the International Council for Children’s Books;
4. The Public Authority for Books has issued publications over 17 years for 35,000 titles distributed as to 95% of the volume of each issue. The Authority participated in reading activities through its 65 internal Information Centers as follows: the Unit for Developmental Information: 65, the Unit for Clubs and Children’s Libraries: 37, Sight Seeing Clubs: 35, Public Libraries: 30, Information Technology Clubs: 30. Available in these clubs are special halls for children and youth, equipped for various purposes. In the year 2007, the information complexes and centers spread in the Governorates of Egypt executed a number of activities within the framework of the project “Reading for All” such as seminars: 49, information meetings: 111, competitions: 186, exhibitions: 29, trips and visits: 72, video performances: 432 and meetings for the development of skills: 35;
5. Course sessions for instruction on computers were introduced, mostly aimed at training children on creative and critical thinking and on team work;
6. Libraries were supplied with a number of modern cultural material with concentration on participating in a number of modernized sessions for children and adults and in different languages in addition to Arabic;
7. Internal competitions in the library were executed under the title “Read a Book and a Prize Is Yours”;
8. The program “A Writer and a Book” which is discussed in the seminars executed in the various Governorates;
9. Executing the competition of “The Distinguished Library” in order to prompt libraries to develop and improve their performance;
10. The scope of work in the project “Reading for All” extended to include a great number of libraries. In the Governorate of Cairo, the number of participating libraries in the project “Reading for All” was 948 and 45 mobile libraries for delivering cultural service to popular and random areas, containing books and sources for all age

groups. The Governorate of Asiout also participated in this project through 1,500 libraries. Among these libraries were the following:-

- **The Mubarak Library:-** A number of activities were planned for 2007 such as workshops for children and youth (5-16 years) on Arabic calligraphy on Saturdays and Mondays and the technology workshop for the same age group, held daily in the children's section of the Library. Performances of international children's films are also shown at the Library on Sunday and Wednesday of every week for the duration of the Campaign "Reading for All". Schooling on chess is already open to children in order to prompt them to creative thinking and develop their intellectual skills;
- **Al-Ma'ādī Library:-** This Library belongs to the Integrated Care Society and planned the presentation of activities related to "Reading for All" during 2007. It was supplied with a collection of references and sources in various cultural fields in addition to its presentation of a number of activities and programs such as the program on "Future Kids" which aims at planting the concepts relative to the fundamentals of using computers and building their creative skills. There were planned also a number of training sessions for teaching music and choral singing, sessions for drawing and artistic work, seminars, meetings and exhibitions;
- **The Grand Library of Cairo:-** In adopting the project of "Reading for All", this Library concentrated on the question of eradicating the three illiteracies represented by spelling illiteracy, cultural illiteracy and information illiteracy, in addition to disseminating the two cultures manifested in the culture of human and social sciences and the scientific culture of nature and technology on the basis of integrated human knowledge. The Library receives 500 visitors daily and organizes a series of seminars, cultural meetings, workshops and art exhibitions in addition to its adoption of a number of activities addressed to children such as drawing, drama, wall bulletins and others.

The Public Authority for Culture Palaces was also concerned with the project of the Campaign of “Reading for All” as this was included in the year 2007 in 150 of the Authority’s cultural sites in all Governorates in addition to culture gardens and civil societies. 150 libraries belonging to the Public Authority as well as 522 cultural sites participated in the culture gardens and the cultural assemblies of “Reading for All” in public parks and mobile libraries in new urban developments. The Public Authority for Culture Palaces also brings out a collection of issues including a series of Egyptian items for children, Shawqiyyāt by Ahmad Shawqī and a collection of the works of Ḥāfiẓ Ibrahim\*. Additionally, it organized a number of competitions such as “Read and Answer”, “For Whom Did I Read?” and “The Best Library”. It also participated in national activities and presented a number of seminars and projects such as the seminar on “The Return to Roots”, seminars of the Salon of General Culture and the seminars of “The Beloveds’ Perfume”.

After reviewing the above, we can say that the project of “Reading for All” must be based in its core on the importance of the continuity round the year of publications by the Family Library by issuing a book a week after the termination of the summer holidays. What must be taken into consideration parallel to that is the important role of the imperative participation by the private sector and the publishers’ sector through prompting them to support the efforts directed towards encouraging reading, materially and morally, so that ultimately the continuity and persistence of this Campaign will be generally achieved.

A study was also made which aimed at analyzing the intellectual Arabic output issued by children’s libraries over ten years between 1986 and 1995 in order to identify the status quo in this field and explore its future. Work started by identifying writings about children’s libraries relying on the various editions of *al-dalīl al-bibliogrāfi li al-’intāj al-fikrī al-’arabī fi majāl al-maktabāt wa al-ma’lūmāt (The Bibliographic Directory for Arabic Intellectual Output in the Field of Libraries and Information)*. After that, various statistical data was classified and most writings were checked.

### **The Prizes:-**

\* Ahmad Shawqī and Ḥāfiẓ Ibrahim were leading poets of the Arab literary scene in the earlier part of the Twentieth century. Indeed, the former was formally accorded the title of *amīr al-shu’arā’* (Prince of Poets) [the Translator].



1. The competition for literary, artistic, practical and scientific creativity, the first three winners will be awarded financial rewards;
2. The central competition for of talented people and innovators;
3. The competition of plastic arts for which ten prizes in kind are allocated in the fields of cinematographic culture. It includes two programs, workshops for cartoon films and film performances in the provinces.

## **Associations**

There is in Egypt a Publishers' Association. The other parties to the publishing of children's books, writers, art drawers, translators, critics and journalists specialized in the field of childhood are not separated from the general associations such as the Journalists' Association and the Writers' Association. Annex No. (1) gives indications of the Egyptian Publishers' Association.

Annex No. (2) Indicates the achievements of the National Council for Children.

## **Publishers and Distributors**

Despite the undertaking by the State of the larger part of the burden of publishing, private sector publishers have a different view for they have pointed out the absence of classification for the books addressed to the age group 4-12 years. Instead, classification takes place on the basis of subjects. A leading publisher<sup>9</sup> indicated that there is an issue of competition between what each of the public sector and private sector present in respect of understanding the standard of children's books and comprehending their requirements, particularly in countries considered bastions for publishing such as Egypt and Lebanon.

The publisher sees that an unusual mushrooming has materialized in the publishing of children's books and the standard of their quality during the last ten years when openness occurred in respect of other countries' literary output such as that of Saudi Arabia, Jordan and others.

---

<sup>9</sup> Personal interview with Mr. Ibrahim al-Mu'allim, proprietor of dār al-shurūq.

The publisher's point of view was that the fundamental problems related in particular to children's books have to do with distribution and he summed them up as follows:-

- 1- The non existence of a sufficient number of public and school libraries;
- 2- The shortage of trained qualifications among librarians;
- 3- Enough literary criticism allotted to writing for children;
- 4- The urgent need for partnership between the initiatives of the public sector and those of the private sector.

As is the case in Lebanon, there is no separation between publishers and distributors. The most important publishing and distribution firms in Egypt (private sector) are:-

- 1- dār al-shurūq;
- 2- nahḍat Miṣr;
- 3- Abul Hōle;
- 4- dār Elias;
- 5- dār al-kitāb al-Miṣrī al-Lubnānī;
- 6- al-safīr;
- 7- 'Aṭfālunā.

As for governmental distributors, their list includes newspaper publishing houses such as the newspapers *al-'akhbār* (*The News*) and *al-'ahrām* (*The Pyramids*), *dār al-ma'ārif* (*The House of Knowledge*) and others. However, in reality there is no actual separation nor is there a reference or a follow-up study to indicate the volume of distribution and publishing but rather booklets distributed annually concerning issues, titles and prices.

### **Magazines – Information: Television and Radio Programs and Internet Sites:-**

The researchers could not obtain copies of the works pertaining to television and radio programs due to difficulties and the requirement of numerous procedures. However, the Center for Information and Research purchased a sample representing children's books issued by the private sector and will deliver it to the Analind Foundation.

After viewing the books available in the markets and their prices, it was evident that the average cost price of a book ranged from gratis to

Egyptian £ 65 [U.S.\$ 11.94]. This throws open enquiries about the accessibility that the private sector can provide in case of partnership with the public sector which distributes books gratis at present. It was also noticed that there is a difference in quality and technical production when the same book is produced by the private sector which is favor of the former.

### **Case Study 1**

**The magazine *qaṭr al-nadā (The Dewdrop)* addresses the age group from 7-14 years, i.e. to children from the First Elementary until the Third Preparatory. 15% of the magazine is allocated for writings and drawings by children. This is “untouchable space” due to the magazine’s desire to leave it free for children to express their views.**

**The magazine was established on the 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1995 and is subordinate to the Public Authority for Culture Palaces.**

**In addition to the magazine’s objective which is to provide free space for the child, its policy had been constructed to make it accessible at the lowest price to the greatest possible number of children. Its cost is Egyptian £ 2.5 [U.S. \$ 0.4537] but it is sold for Egyptian £ 1 only [U.S. \$ 0.1814], i.e. 14,000 copies cost Egyptian £ 24,000 [U.S. \$ 4,355.717] the greater part of which is borne by the magazine, one of the most popular under demand by children<sup>10</sup>.**

### **Case study 2**

#### **The National Center for Child Culture**

**The Center was established in 1980 with the objective of providing the following services:**

- 1- Research dedicated to childhood;**
- 2- The adoption of competitions for children (reading, poetry and essay);**
- 3- Competitions for promising authors, a specialized committee to determine the suitability for publishing;**
- 4- Supervision over the exhibition for children’s books at the end of**

<sup>10</sup> Presently, the U.S. \$ is equivalent to Egyptian £ 5.51.

**November annually;**  
**5- Organize the Alexandria Exhibition in cooperation with the Public Authority for Books and the Alexandria Library.**  
**The Council distributes books gratis and is currently printing books on CDs. As an example of the Council's commitment to make books accessible, the cost of the large book with hard cover reaches Egyptian £8 [U.S.\$ 1.452] but it is distributed free. The cost of an ordinary book can be Egyptian £ 3.50 [U.S.\$ 0.635] but is distributed free.**  
**As to distribution to schools, it is done upon request or according to need.**

### **Researcher's Notes – Specifics**

- 1- The difficulty of obtaining information due to the need for long desk procedures;
- 2- The plurality of the parties supervising and producing children's literature;
- 3- The absence of clear comprehension of developmental needs and their relation to literature addressed to children;
- 4- The absence of partnership mechanisms with the private sector and civil society;
- 5- The inability to meet children and teachers because the timing for the research was for the period of the summer holiday;
- 6- The short period although Analind allowed the Center for Information and Research the opportunity to extend the research period.

### **Recommendations:**

- 1- The necessity to work on a lexicon that would include all writers, art drawers and poets specializing in children's literature, this lexicon to be updated periodically;
- 2- Detailed information should be made available in respect of who receives the technical production directed towards children such as journalists, critics, publishers and distributors through a data base that must be updated periodically in addition to the institutions specialized in distributing and disseminating children's literature;

- 3- An evaluation study at national level of the influence of the Campaign of “Reading for All” over children and the system of education;
- 4- A data base at national level allocated for civil efforts in the field of supporting children’s literature and encouraging reading separate from the rest of the societies which provide developmental services.
- 5- The need to focus on the Egyptian identity through works produced by the private civil sector;