

## Library concepts in Jordan

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(Am 7. und 8. Juni 2001 fand anlässlich des hundertjährigen Bestehens der Zentral- und Landesbibliothek Berlin ein internationales Bibliothekskolloquium statt, über das in diesem Heft berichtet wird. Verschiedene Vorträge des Kolloquiums sollen in den nächsten Ausgaben des BIBLIOTHEKSDIENST abgedruckt werden. Den Anfang macht ein Beitrag über das Bibliothekswesen in Jordanien, den wir ausgewählt haben, weil man darüber bislang noch gar nichts lesen konnte und weil die Stadt Amman Gastgeber der diesjährigen Intamel-Konferenz ist.)

### Introduction

The modern library movement in Jordan started its real progress in the 1950s, in spite of the scarcity of professionals. The profession was then considered a low -priority field, and the training institutions were not existing in the whole Arab region. This means that the country still stands at the threshold of the field. It is thus reasonable to judge on the development of librarianship in Jordan in the perspective of the short life of the library movement and socio-economic conditions of Jordan as a developing country with limited resources.

The number of libraries that were established during the first decade of development was as follow: 23 school libraries, 4 teacher training institute libraries and 10 special libraries. Moreover, this decade witnessed the following important events:

- The first Municipal Public Library was established in Irbid (the second largest city) in 1956.
- The British Council and American Cultural Centre Libraries were established in 1950, and 1956 respectively.
- The School Library Division was established at the Ministry of Education in 1958.
- Two Jordanians were sent on fellowships to study librarianship in the United States (a lady) in 1954 and UK (a gentleman) in 1956.

In the 1960s more substantial progress was achieved in the form of:

- The establishment of the first university (The University of Jordan) and its library in 1962.

- Teaching librarianship at the teacher training institutes started in 1966.
- Most important is the establishment of the Jordanian Library Association in 1963.
- More fellowships were offered particularly from UNESCO.
- Amman Municipal Public Library was established in 1960.

Progress in establishing libraries in Jordan continued both quantitatively and qualitatively as demonstrated in the following figures by the end of the twentieth century:

• National Library	1
• Public Libraries	110
• University Libraries	20 — there are 7 public and 13 private universities
• Community College Libraries	50
• School Libraries	1200
• Children Libraries	35
• Special Libraries	104
• Libraries of Foreign Cultural Centres	7

This brings the total number to 1527 libraries having 5 million items, the majority of which are books and 16 thousand journal titles. It has to be noted here that some libraries expanded through establishing branch libraries. The major example for this is the Greater Amman Public Libraries, which has 30 branch libraries for children and adults.

Nevertheless, we cannot weight all libraries by the same value, as some of them are too small to be compared to others of the same type.

### Library Concepts in Jordan

Needless to say that the library concepts in Jordan are similar to those prevailing in any developed country. But limited resources do hinder the advancement of libraries in Jordan to match the required international standards. The major concepts that will be discussed here are:

1. Professionalization
2. Library Legislation
3. Computerization
4. Library Education

## 5. Library Literature

### 1. Professionalization

Perhaps one of the most important concepts in the Jordanian Libraries is the professionalization of Library work which gained its legacy from the endless, and great efforts exerted by library workers based on their self-capabilities.

Fortunately, this started rather early as the Jordanian Library Association was established in 1963, and it held its first meeting on 13 .2. 1963. The JLA aims at:

1. Gathering libraries together and developing the library movement in Jordan.
2. Sharing efforts and developing library management and services.
3. Improving the conditions of librarians and developing their qualifications.
4. Seeking to issue library legislation.
5. Promoting the establishment of libraries and documentation and information centres.
6. Promoting and supporting the issue of studies and publishing of research and publications.
7. Contributing to the development of library movement regionally and globally.

The JLA has accomplished the following major activities:

- Holding both general and specialized training courses (Up to 2000 JLA trained 2500 persons).
- Issuing a quarterly professional journal starting 1965 (Risalat al-Maktaba = The Library Message).
- Holding local conferences and seminars.
- Participating in Arab specialized conferences and seminars.
- Contributing to the establishment of libraries in Jordan and supporting them with the consultancy and expertise required.
- Preparing guides, directories, bibliographies and specialized indexes.
- Contributing to teaching at colleges and universities in Jor-

dan.

- Cooperation and coordination with Arab library associations.

Membership of JLA is of the following categories:

- Honorary members
- Full members (individuals): 520
- Support members: 260
- Affiliate members (Libraries and institutions): 170
- Correspondent member (individuals and libraries from outside Jordan): 130

JLA is a member of IFLA, AFLA, the Islamic Library Union and the Federation of Greater Syria Library Associations, it is a founding member of the Arab Club for Information (ARABCIN).

## 2. Library Legislation

- The Jordanian constitution states the protection of the citizens' intellectual property rights, including access to information.
- The following library legislations are now valid in Jordan.
  - Ministry of Education byelaws and regulations related to school libraries and using information technology (Now computer teaching is a must starting from the first elementary class).
  - Higher education law, which includes texts, related to libraries of higher education institutions and their accreditation standards.
  - Municipalities law, which states that every municipality must establish a public library.
  - National library legislations:
    - Byelaw of the National Library 1990.
    - Law of Author's Rights.
    - Law of Publications and Publishing.
  - The Law of the National Information Centre established in 1993.

### 3. Computerization

Computers were first introduced in Jordanian libraries and information centres late in the 1980s. Some libraries have succeeded in computerizing their operations, such as Abdel Hameed Shoman Public Library and Yarmouk University Library. Others are in the process of doing so such as the Greater Amman Municipality Libraries.

The major software packages used in Joran are:

- CDS/ISIS (for micros) developed by UNESCO, Arabicized by the Arab League Documentation Centre (ALDOC) and distributed in Jordan by Abdel Hameed Shoman Public Library. A user group has been formed and it holds annual meetings. JLA also holds training courses on the software.
- MINISIS, developed by IDRC of Canada, arabicized by ALDOC and supported in Jordan by Yarmouk University Library.

The two packages are not adequately applied due to the lack of eddiciency of ALDOC in the arabicization and training. Some libraries have developed their own local systems.

Many libraries have started using the Internet. Abdel Hameed Shoman Public Library is also leading in this activity and it offers the services free of charge. But the use is not yet up to the expectations or up to the non-library use of the Internet even outside the capital Amman.

One important factor will enhance the use of the Internet and information technology, including the introduction of computer teaching from the first school year. This is represented by the great efforts of HRM King Abdullah II. His Majesty has also instructed the government to establish community centres in every region across the Kingdom which will offer walk-in access to Internet and information services for the young and old, the poor and illiterate, with special attention to women and youth. These centres will be part of a national network that will deliver standardized products and services to people. The ultimate aim of this national plan is employ information and communications technology as a tool to create individual opportunities and choices that will translate into thriving community development.

The first centre was launched in October 2000 in Safawi – a remote desert township. Twenty such centres are planned for phase I. Phase II will involve establishing and promoting centres in strategic locations across the country. The project is supervised by the National Information Centre.

It is noticed that Jordan is one of the enthusiastic countries in respect of the protection of intellectual property, particularly in the field of information technology. The National Library is very active in this concern.

The National Information Centre has a major role in establishing a national information policy through connecting information producing centres that are homogenous in one sector; there are 17 such information sectors, where each sector has own focal point. The results of NIC efforts are evidenced in functionalizing the coordination committees, and establishing standards to facilitate access and exchange of information. For this end, it held a seminar in collaboration with JLA on the Jordanian Unified Format based on CCF of UNESCO, prepared by the Jordanian information expert, Mr. Mahmoud Itayem. The NIC has so far published two editions of the format. Mr. Itayem has also prepared tools to facilitate computerization in the whole Arab library, the major type of them is thesauri as he prepared the Arabic editions of some international ones, such as UNBIS, AGROVOC, Macro thesaurus, ILO Thesaurus, Interwater Thesaurus and MeSH. He also developed other thesauri, particularly the Expanded Thesaurus, sponsored by Abdel Hameed Shoman Foundation, Juma Al-Majed Centre for Culture and Heritage, and Dubai Municipality.

#### 4. Library Education

There are three levels of library education in Jordan:

##### a) University Level

In 1979, the University of Jordan started a postgraduate diploma in librarianship and documentation. Unfortunately this diploma was cancelled in 1994.

Presently, there are three universities that offer undergraduate courses leading to a bachelor degree:

- Balqa Applied University
- Philadelphia University
- Zerqa Private University

##### b) Community College Level

This level started in 1966/67. Then it was suspended. It was resumed in 1980/81. The community colleges graduated a large number of students. But these graduates suffer of unemployment.

## c) Training Courses

This task is accomplished at both elementary and advanced levels by many Jordanian institutions, particularly the following:

- JLA
- Ministry of Education
- Universities
- Royal Scientific Society (RSS)

Jordan also benefits from regional and international courses.

As a result, Jordan has the following types of educated and/or trained members of staff:

- |                        |      |
|------------------------|------|
| • Doctorates           | 14   |
| • Masters              | 35   |
| • Postgraduate Diploma | 275  |
| • BA                   | 50   |
| • Community College    |      |
| Postsecondary Diploma  | 2500 |
| • Trainees of Courses  | 2500 |

#### 5. Library Literature

The early library literature in Jordan was in the form of articles published in "The Teacher's message" published quarterly by the Ministry of Education. Later, the JLA quarterly "Risalat Al-Maktaba" was used as a vehicle.

In 1965, the first book, entitled „Classification“ authored by the late Mr. Mahmoud Al-Akhras, was published. Now some university and other institutions publish newsletters. The total number of publications is now more than 300 items in the form of books, bibliographic guides and dissertations. The major contributor to this is Mr. Mahmoud Ityem, who authored and/or translated about 100 titles in the form of books, manuals, cataloguing rules, the ISBDs handbooks, lists of subject headings and thesauri. He also prepared around 400 items in the form of journal articles, conference papers, consultancy studies, mission reports, lectures, speeches and Arab standards. Other names contributed later to this activity. But pioneering remains to Mr. Al-Akhras who diversified his works in the form of books, articles, conference papers and bibliographies.

JLA is the major publisher in Jordan. Its *Risalat al-maktaba* started without ceasing since 1965. It is considered the earliest current library journal in the Arab world.

Electronic publishing has also taken off. The Expanded Thesaurus and the Union List of Journals, both published by Abdel Hameed Shoman Foundation, are on CD-ROM, so is the University of Jordan List of Subject Headings. On the other hand, the National Bibliography (annual) is distributed by the National Library on floppy disks.

This is a brief of some concepts on Jordanian libraries and information centres.

Librarians in Jordan are active in other concepts, but my intention to keep the presentation brief made me ignore them here.

