

Your Right to Access to Knowledge

Seminar 29-30 April, 2012

Recommendation

In the pursuit of actions that promote awareness and deliberation, and in celebration of the World Book Day and Intellectual Property Day, the BA Francophone Library and the Legal department, *A2K initiative*, has organized a seminar for reflecting upon the right to access to knowledge. Moreover, being aware of the importance of the access to knowledge, and seeing in it, as Michel Arnaud, an international common good to convey, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina has initiated numerous activities to spread the philosophy of the access to knowledge.

Ambassador Naela Gabr, President of the National Commission for La Francophonie; and Professor Osama El Fouli, Governor of Alexandria, honored the Seminar with their presence. Furthermore, in order to address this crucial issue on the national and international levels, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina also had the pleasure of receiving Wiebke Dalhoff, representative of the International Federation of Library Associations (IFLA); Victor Vazquez, representative of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) via video-conference; as well as Gaëlle Krikorian, author of a number of books evoking the theme in question, two of which were the subjects of two sessions; namely *Libres Savoirs: Les biens communs de la connaissance* (France, C&F editions, 2011) and *Access to Knowledge in the Age of Intellectual Property* (USA, Zone Books, 2010). Similarly, Hervé le Croisnier participated with a video as well as the World Blind Union which participated through a video that was sent by Christopher Friend and Dan Pescod. The videos were shown on the first day of the Seminar.

At the regional level, the Bibliotheca Alexandrina received Mr. Hatem Abdel Kader, Counselor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Dr. Mokhtar Waridi, First Secretary of the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the United Nations and other international organizations at Geneva; Moshira Elamrawy, Counselor of Arabic Projects at Wikimedia; Dr. Mohamed El Nagar, Lecturer at the Faculty of Law, University of

Alexandria; and Professor Mohamed Nour Farahat, Professor of Law Philosophy and History, Faculty of Law, University of Zakazik. A number of political decision-makers were also invited to discuss the impact of intellectual property on sharing knowledge and serving the entire society.

Following these discussions the BA compiled a list of recommendations on both the national and international levels that has been discussed by speakers and participants.

On the Regional Level:

Responding to Articles 3, 32, 40, 41 and 42 of the Arab Charter on Human Rights of the League of Arab States; acknowledging the World Blind Union's campaign for a WIPO treaty on copyright for visually impaired and other print disabled people, Acknowledging The Taha Hussein Library which present a new approach in library services for the blind and visually impaired to offer equal access to all users regardless to their disability, and finally in view of the fact of by the almost total absence of accessible versions of works across the Arabic speaking world for the people Persons with Disabilities, it was strongly recommended to:

1. Request the Governing Board of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction to include in the rules of entry a requirement that the publishers nominating all long-listed books must provide at least one regional resource centre, such as the Library of Alexandria, with an electronic text version to facilitate the production and distribution of Braille, large print and talking book formats of the eventual short-listed titles on a not-for-profit basis, to be available from the night of the award ceremony.
2. And request the Governing Board of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction to negotiate with the publishers to obtain the right to distribute these accessible formats to any print disabled person, or to any institution or library serving such persons, throughout the League of Arab States community, in keeping with the 2009 precedent set by the Man Booker Prize, and in keeping with the objective of the International Prize for Arabic Fiction's own objective of promoting the spread of Arabic literature.

On the international level, it's recommended to:

1. Ensure equal public access to and use of information and knowledge by bringing balance to the international copyright system in the 21st century, for the benefit of all members of society;
2. Support for a binding international instrument with regard to copyright limitations and exceptions for libraries and archives; and
3. Recommend to the WIPO General Assembly 2012 that discussions on copyright limitations and exceptions for libraries and archives continue at the Standing Committee on Copyright and Related Rights with a view toward the convening of a diplomatic conference to finalise treaty language in the near future.

On the national level, we should:

- 1- Provide Training workshops for the young and middle career practitioners, librarians, ICT engineers, Researchers etc., to raise awareness about Intellectual Property and access to knowledge issues to be organized by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina with the support of all concerned organizations, nationally and internationally.
- 2- Address the Egyptian Parliament, the committee of Culture, Media, and Education to revisit the intellectual property law number 82 /2002 to make necessary amendments to allow and facilitate access to knowledge. The Study committed by the BA A2K initiative “Authors Rights in the Egyptian Law, an analytical study from a development perspective” can be a reference in this regard.
3. Make available to public all kind of knowledge products produced by public money.
4. Use the flexible legal licences such as Creative Commons licences. This is recommended to Cultural and Educational Institutions.