REPORT OF THE STUDY VISIT TO BALTIMORE 2008

8 September - 28 September 2008 Mona Helmy

Introduction

The Baltimore Friends of Baltimore-Luxor-Alexandria Sister City Committee (BLASCC) organized a study visit for me (Mona Helmy, from the Media Department of the Library of Alexandria), to visit several places related to my work during September 2008.

The study visit started at the **BOPA** (Baltimore Office of Promotion & the Arts), which organizes the Baltimore Book Festival, then to the City Hall of Baltimore. The schedule also included visits to the Pratt Library, the Walters Art Museum and the Library of Congress in Washington DC.

It was really a great, useful and valuable experience. The report will cover the day to day details of my schedule in each organization.

First of all, I'd like to thank **Dr. Adbel Wahab ElAbd**, Chairman of the Baltimore-Luxor-Alexandria Sister City Committee (BLASCC), who took care of everything during my trip; accommodation, transportation & my program itself.

I'm very grateful to **Amy Riolo's** family for hosting me in Washington DC for two days, **Ahmed Sary's** family who always take care of my requests and **Renee Samuels** for always trying to solve any problem I could face.

And I own special thanks to **Catalina Rodriguez**, who was very kind and helpful to me most of the time during my stay in USA.



Mona Helmy & Abdelwahab Elabd in front of City Hall Baltimore

Report

1st week (Monday 8th September to Friday 12th September 2008) At BOPA (Baltimore Office of Promotion & the Arts) from 9:00am to 5:00pm

As we organize an annual book fair at the Library of Alexandria, it was a great pleasure for me to visit the Baltimore Office of Promotion & the Arts, in my first week in USA, to see & participate in the steps of organizing their Annual Book Festival.

In the morning of my first day at BOPA, I met **Mrs. Kathleen Horing** (Director of Festivals), who introduced me to her assistant, **Miss. Jessie Oehler** (Production Assistant – Festivals), who took care of my program during my stay in BOPA.

I started with a quick meeting with Jessie, to whom I introduce myself and explained what I actually do at the BA, and then she took me in a tour at BOPA to present me to all the staff.

We had a meeting with the BOPA Book Festival team, where everyone presented what they did during a week, and what they have during their next week, the problems they faced and what helps they needed.

I participated with the BOPA team to prepare the parking labels for exhibitors, authors & visitors (each category differentiated with a different color).



Kathleen Horing, Mona Helmy & Jessie Oehler at BOPA

Mr. Bill Gilmore (Director of BOPA) asked me, being the Head of Media Archiving Unit at the Library of Alexandria, to attend with him a press conference about James Smith at Towson High School. The Governor, the Mayor of Baltimore and many other people were present at the conference.

Then I returned back to BOPA to continue my work in their Book Festival. I helped them at preparing folders for each day of the festival, where we put the poster of the book festival, plan of the fair, parking plan, tent and exhibitor guidelines.

Then they asked me to prepare two complete surveys, for them to distribute during the Book Festival:

- 1- Exhibitors Survey
- 2- Visitor Survey

We (all the Book Festival team) had a "logistic Meeting" with police officers, people from the government and others to discuss fire security, the plan, the festival security, medical preparations, number of exhibitors and authors, where people should park their cars, which streets will be closed during the fair....etc

Then we returned back to BOPA to continue working on the book festival preparations: making name tags to authors, classifying them, putting the final schedule of authors, checking the numbers of exhibitors, checking what each exhibitor need during the festival; chairs, tables and who must pay for extra demands

2nd week (Monday 15th September & Friday 19th September 2008) at Baltimore City Hall

I Met **Mrs. Renee Samuels** (Director of Mayor's Office of International & Immigrant Affairs), who took me in a tour in the City Hall, then I received a presentation about the City Hall and their activities.

After that Renee provided me with an invitation for the "Baltimore Walking Tour", to visit the "Aquarium" and the "Science Museum".

Because of the visit of Mrs. Sheila Dixon, the Mayor of Baltimore, to Egypt (in October 2008) Renee asked me to make a search on internet for telephone numbers and addresses of historical places that the mayor team will visit during their stay in Egypt, and also telephones and address of hotels where they will stay.

She asked me also to translate into Arabic the business cards of the delegation and to make a design for them.

2nd week (Tuesday 16th to 18th Thursday September 2008) at Enoch Pratt free Library – from 10:00am to 4:00pm

The Enoch Pratt free Library is considered the oldest FREE library in USA.

In the morning I met **Mrs. Judith Cooper** (Coordinator, Programs & Publications) "at the main building of Pratt library" who took me to visit 4 branches of the Pratt Library, making a tour in each one:

1. Orleans Street Branch

2. Southeast Anchor Library (this one was renovated and opened in June 2007)

3. The Herring Run Branch

4. The Roland Park Branch (newly expanded and renovated).

We went to see the Digital book mobile, it was 2 days only in Baltimore, and then the van moved to another state, to show people how they can use the net to download as books & many music as they can.



Digital Book Mobile

After lunch we returned back to the main Pratt Library where I met **Mrs. Elene Riordan**, the one who is responsible of the children library, she explained to me that they served children from day 1 to 12 years old, they organize weekly program for children and their parents, they have special books for babies, they have also programs guiding parents how to deal with their children, and for future mothers how they can read to their babies before they are born, so they can come to this world and love reading.

I had a tour with **Mr. Jeff Korman** (SLRC Manger), where he gave me a brief about Mr. Pratt, and his biography, he showed me some of his books and special library. Mr. Jeff showed me also the Children Library, the audio visual department; he took me for a tour in the reading room and and closed access area.

The Pratt library had the service of giving people "free" computer courses, and also people who had membership can easily download many audio books from the library web site.

During Lunch I had the chance to meet the person responsible about the media in the Pratt Library, who explained to me how he contacts journalists for events inside the library and how many times per week he usually send press releases to journalists.

After that, I had a meeting with Judith cooper, to discuss all about their newsletter and she told me how she always face some problems: like people who don't give the material in the deadline time, how she has to go after them to ask for their articles.

She told me also the procedures of publishing the newsletter: every branch of Pratt Library must call Judith to suggest subjects; if any writer will come to the library to have a lecture he must give her his CV and a summary of the book, then Mrs. Judith publishes this in the newsletter with the date and time of the lecture.

After collecting all the newsletter data, the Pratt library send the material to the designer (outside the Library) who has a ready layout where he puts the material inside, then send it back to Mrs. Judith in a PDF format to revise it and make the necessary corrections if needed. All these steps are through the net.

Mrs. Judith showed me also how the Pratt Library hired a designer outside the library itself to change their logo. She showed me the old and the new ones. She showed me also how the new logo entered in everything: heads letter, envelopes, newsletters, brochures.....etc.

The Pratt Library organized a Press Conference because the "Bank of America" was giving them a donation of 500.000 Dollars, so they invited TV and journalists to cover the event: there were 4 channels presented and many journalists who were very interested to ask the director of "Bank of America" some questions as well as the Director of the Pratt Library.



Judith Cooper & Mona Helmy in front of Orleans street branch

After lunch we went to a book shop near Enoch Pratt free library Orleans street branch (one of the Pratt Library branch), in this branch I saw a very intelligent system of returning books: user can come any time to the library even if it's closed, there is a big case outside the building of the library related to the system inside the library, where he can return back the book, and then automatically this book is marked "returned" in the library database, and after that the librarian can put it back on shelves.

After returning from the Orleans branch I had a meeting with Mrs. Judith and others from Walters Art Museum, John Hopkins University everyone was presenting the activities of his institute or organization during the next month, they discuss also what every organization will do during Baltimore Book Festival.

3rd week (Monday 22nd September & Tuesday 23rd September 2008) at Library of Congress, Washington DC – from 9:00am to 5:00pm



Library of Congress

I had a tour at the Library. It consists of 3 buildings; the Thomas Jefferson Building (1897), the John Adams Building (1938) and the James Madison Building (1981), they explained to me the history of the library, they showed me also the reading area, I visited also their museums.

Then I met **Mr. David Albee** who was responsible for me during my two days stay in the library of congress, he gave me an overview about their book festival, we discussed the procedures of their fair, he showed me the file of their last book fair (it's a one day fair) Then I had a meeting with **Mrs. Sheryl Cannady**, (Media Specialist) she gave me an orientation about the media and publications in the library of congress.

In my second day at the library of congress, I assisted a meeting concerning their book fair: this meeting was for the volunteers, they explained to them how to deal with people, what shall they do if they face any problem, also security came and explained to them how they can recognize them (from their clothes and colors) and how can they deal until the police arrive if they'll face any big problem. They explained to everyone what will be their role during the fair.

Then I went with Mr. David to the fair to see the preparations of the tent, the electricity, the sound system.....etc

3rd week (Wednesday 24th September & Thursday 25th September 2008) at Walters Art Museum – from 10:00am to 5:00pm

I met in the morning **Mrs. Christine Henry** (Head of the Library) who told me my schedule in Walters Art Museum for the 2 days, then **Mr. Bill** took me in a tour in the museum, I visited the Egyptian corner, the Coptic and the Islamic one, the Jewelry rare collection, the preservation department. In the afternoon, they took me in a tour to the Japanese corner.



Japanese Collection

I had a meeting with **Mr. Chad Petrovay** (Collection Database Administrator), the one responsible about the new web site of the Walters Museum, he explained how he and his team are preparing the new web site, and how they are identifying every piece in the museum, take a picture for it and write the history of the piece. So any visitor to the site can click on any piece and can know everything about it.

The second day, in the morning I had a meeting with **Mr. Greg**, we talked about the Walters Art Museum newsletter, what is the material, how they collect data... etc

Then I met **Mrs. Emily Blumenthal** (Manager of Family Programs) we talked about children programs, their monthly brochures to parents and children, how they organize workshops to children to come to the museum and to be more close to collections in an easy way.

Even they invented a very funny character (Waltee) it's a puppet who have a lion body and pharaonic clothes, and who can explain to children all the collection in the museum and tell them stories.

The Walters Art Museum was preparing a site for **Waltee**: like a game where children can go in a play with Waltee in the museum through the net, in each level of the game they can know a data about each collection, and every one they answer Waltee question they go to the next level.



<u>Waltee</u>

In the afternoon I had a meeting with Dr. Elabd and the people responsible about the "The Egyptian Corner" site.

Then I Went to Georges Peabody Library, who is a part of the Sheridan Libraries Special Collections where I had a small tour. It's a very special building with a 5 fabulous levels balconies, which rise directly to the skylight.

On Friday 26th September 2008, from 4:00pm to 8:00pm, I went to Baltimore Book Festival, talked with publishers and exhibitors



Baltimore Book Festival



Baltimore Book Festival

Conclusion

This study visit was an excellent experience to me, because of the variety of places I visited, people I met, knowing other opinion and knowing new ideas for my work.

Again, I would like to thank Dr. Elabd and the Baltimore Friends of Baltimore-Luxor-Alexandria Sister City Committee (BLASCC) for this distinguishable opportunity they gave me and for making my trip to USA very useful