

Review from 30/07/2010	Customer:	Rubric:
Articlesize (cm2): 435		ΠΑΙΔΕΙΑ
[matrixMEDIA]	Author:	Subrubric:
		Εκπαιδευτικά ιδρύματα
		Mediatype:Print
CYPRUS WEEKLY		
ημερομηνία: 30/07/2010, από σελίδα 63		

Digitalised heritage priority in Alexandria library collaboration

The digitalisation of Cypriot cultural heritage is likely to be the first joint project between the New Library of Alexandria and The Cyprus Institute following the signing of a collaboration agreement in Paphos.

The agreement will launch the joint organisation of research and educational programmes with a particular focus on digital libraries, study, recording and visualisation of cultural heritage. It is also expected to strengthen efforts to secure competitive funding.

It was signed by the President of The Cyprus Institute, Professor Costas N. Papanicolas and the Director of the Library of Alexandria and Institute board member, Professor Ismail Serageldin.

Sunday's ceremony took place at the newly-renovated District Officer's residence and Cyprus Institute local headquarters in Paphos in the presence of academics, officials and politicians.

Addressing the Assembly, Professor Ismail Serageldin spoke of the city's historic links with Cyprus.

"After Alexander the Great selected the site, it was Ptolemy Soter who actually built and launched the ancient library in Alexandria. Ptolemy had an enormous affinity to Cyprus. It is a great privilege for me as librarian to re-tie that knot after thousands of years of hiatus," he said.

The New Library of Alexandria, located in almost the same area as the ancient library which was destroyed, has the largest database in electronic form in the world. It will lend its expertise to researchers and academics in Cyprus to help develop cultural digitalisation locally.

"Digitalisation is the future," Serageldin told The Cyprus Weekly. "The library and The Cyprus Institute will start collaborating in areas which involve digitalisation of heritage

and libraries. Both institutes are developing super computers. We have a computer which processes ten thousand billion calculations per second and is endowed with 3-D simulation and mass storage devices for internet archives. I cannot think of a better partner for regional initiatives than The Cyprus Institute."

The Cyprus Institute, founded in 2005, is a non-profit research and educational institution, with a strong scientific and technological orientation, pursuing issues of regional importance and of global significance in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.

The development of the Institute involves the progressive launching of several cross-disciplinary Research Centres. These currently include: the Energy, Environment and Water Research Centre (EEWRC), the Science and Technology in Archaeology Research Centre (STARC) and the Computation-based Science and Technology Research Centre (CaSToRC). The fourth Centre of the Institute, the Biological Sciences and Human Health Research Centre (BSHHRC) is currently in the mature stage of planning.

Communications Minister Dr. Erato Kozakou-Marcoulli spoke about the importance of research and development for the future of Cyprus.

"Scientific research has key social, cultural, economic and political effects," she said. "The Cyprus government puts great importance on scientific research and development. One of the priorities for Cyprus is to exploit its geographical location and EU accession in order to develop into an innovative regional research centre."

Following the signing, Professor Papanicolas presented Professor Serageldin with a photographic copy of a silver coin bearing an image of Ptolemaic queen, Cleopatra, dressed as Aphrodite. The original coin was minted in Paphos in ancient

times.

On behalf of The Cyprus Institute, Professor Papanicolas also referred to the 'vision' of the mayors of Paphos and Yeroskipou who have been key collaborators in the expansion of facilities.

The signing was the first event to take place in the upgraded centre. The building dates from the 1930s combining architectural elements of Tudor Revival. The offices will support practical work at laboratories, other facilities and premises for summer schools in the Germanina area of Yeroskipou for which construction is expected to start in 2011.

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DONE DEAL: Professor Costas N. Papanicolas and the Director of the Library of Alexandria Professor Ismail Serageldin shake on it (above) as guests and officials applaud

