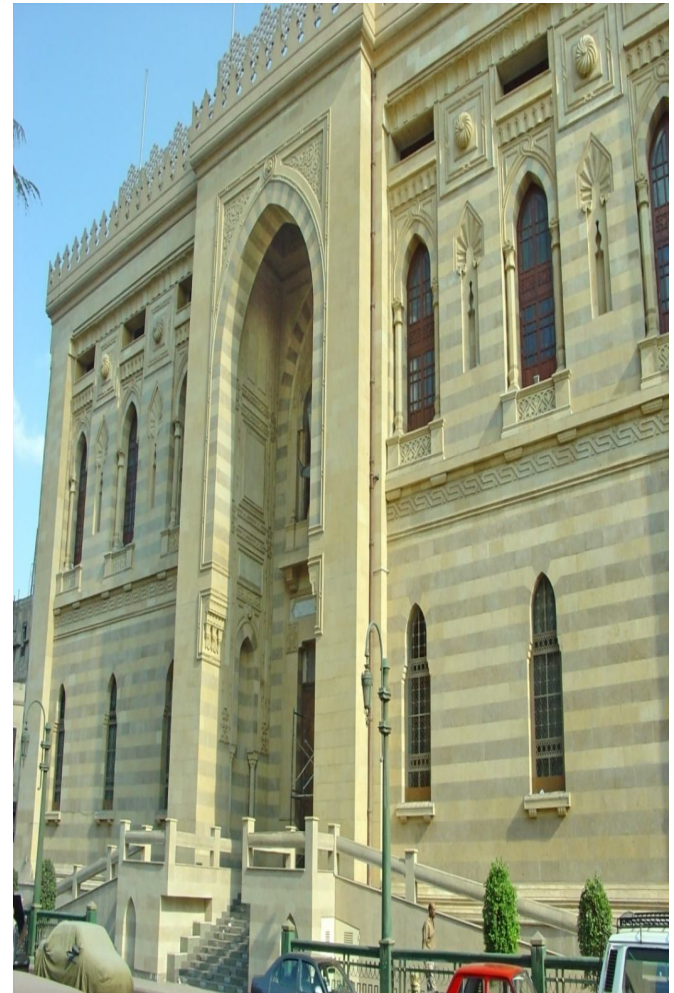




The Recovery of the Institut d'Egypte: The Role of the National Library of Egypt

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Presentation Overview



- ❑ Background
- ❑ Rescue efforts by the National Library of Egypt
- ❑ The role of the Web
- ❑ Lessons Learnt

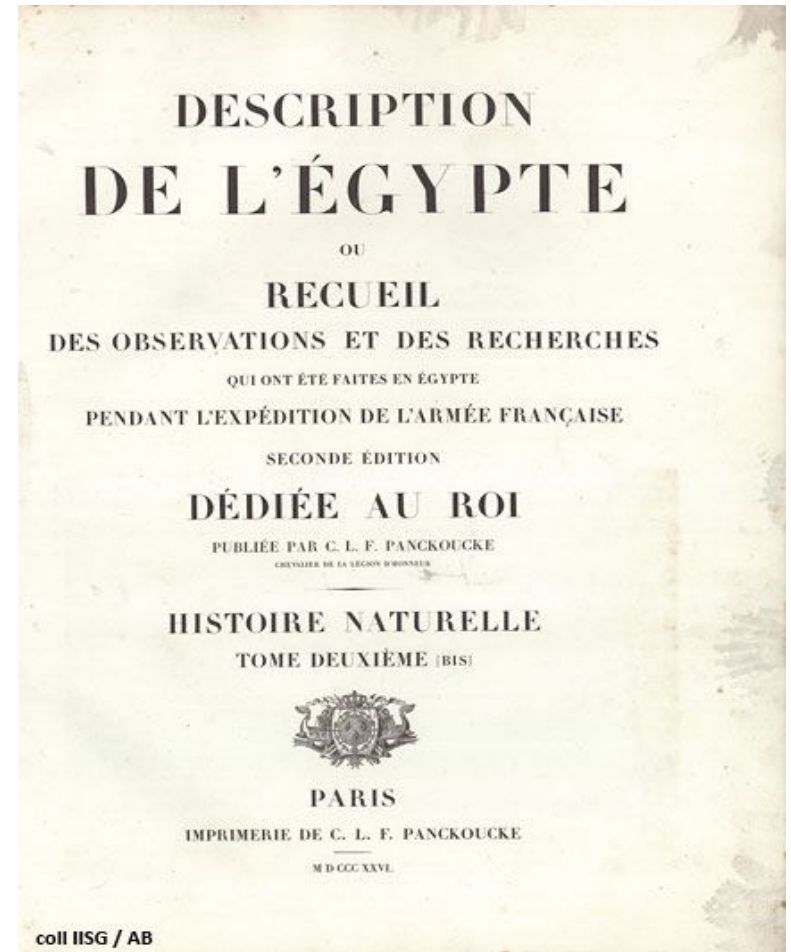
Background



- The Institut d'Égypte is a research center set up in 1798 by Napoleon during his Campaign to Egypt to facilitate research and documentation of historical and cultural events in Egypt.
- It held some 200,000 rare manuscripts, books, documents, maps and studies about Egypt and the Middle East, based on the work of generations of western researchers and scholars.



➤ Among its rich collection is a rare original copy of the 24-volume *Description de l'Egypt*, the first extensive illustrated text on Egyptian antiquities, temples, and monuments.





- The Institute caught fire during clashes between protesters and the military forces in Tahrir square last December in Cairo.
- The resulting destruction and damage affected the structure of the building, as well as the valuable collection of books, manuscripts, documents and artifacts.



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- The two-storey historical building was partially damaged by the fire that had led to the collapse of the ceilings, as well as the destruction of its wooden windows and arcades.
- Only about 50,000 books (out of 196,000 books of the collection) were saved.



دَا اِذَا الْكُفْرُ وَالْوَنَاقِ الْقَوْمِ سَبَّ



Rescue Efforts



The Library set up an emergency plan and assigned leaders for specific areas and activities as follows:

- The situation at the salvage site
- Action/treatment of items as they arrive to the Library
- Required materials and equipment





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Rescue Efforts



- Appropriate dry area location for damp and wet items
- Location to set up vacuum machines
- Curatorship support to select the most important and valuable items for immediate conservation



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The Role of the Web



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- Appeals for help were widely circulated by websites, forums, blogs, mailing lists and social media.
- National and international response has been very prompt from individuals and NGOs.

Lessons Learnt: During the Salvage



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- Compile a list of volunteers; conservators, and curators.
- Compile a list of companies which supply materials, i.e. newspaper, plastic sheeting, carton boxes etc.

Lessons Learnt: During the Salvage



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- Be prepared to handle and deal with the Press. The Press can be useful to organise requests for volunteers and support materials but should not interfere with salvage operations.

Lessons Learnt: During the Salvage



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- Ensure all personnel are aware of health and safety issues and have correct personal protective equipment.
- Organise rota system for volunteers, with clear instructions on their roles and responsibilities.
- Be aware of security issues; restrict access points as a collection could be vulnerable to theft.

Lessons Learnt: General



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- It is important to have an efficient disaster management plan at institutional and national levels.
- Libraries and other cultural institutions should ensure that fire-fighting and security systems are well-maintained.
- It is important to speed up plans for digitizing library collections.



Thank You