

American Books in the Middle East

(Aden, Egypt, and Turkey) reported literacy figures for the basic Unesco publication on the subject. The best one can do is assemble estimates by various observers and hope that an average is somewhere near right. On that basis it appears that there are perhaps 10,000,000 or 12,000,000 literates in the area, or something less than 10% of the total population. Statistics on literacy in English, likewise, are virtually non-existent, and there are not even very many recorded guesses. It seems impossible to put the estimate of literates in English higher than 2,000,000, and it is probably substantially less than that.

But although the number is small now, it is increasing apace, in part as a reflection of increasing general literacy, and in part because of the way in which English is displacing French throughout the Middle East. About half the total population dealt with in this survey is from countries which had French as the foreign language of the educated elite during the colonial period. French continues, of course, to hold the dominant position in North Africa, but elsewhere—even in such French-speaking strongholds as Lebanon, Syria, Turkey, and Iran—English has made astonishing progress in the last decade. As throughout Asia, English is becoming the lingua franca of business, science, and education nearly everywhere, even though it has not yet become the actual second language of all the countries. Because of the expansion of education, and the substantial acceleration of the development of new literates during the decade in which English has been moving ahead, it can be anticipated that the number of people able to read a book in English will increase enormously in coming years. The author believes that the number of book readers in English in the Middle East will at least double and perhaps triple in the next decade.

Even such conspicuous physical objects as libraries seem hard to count in the Middle East, and the researcher finds quite varied reports on the number of public and educational libraries and the number of books they hold. An average seems to be about 200 libraries with combined holdings of about 7,000,000 volumes.

It must be said, however, that these institutions in the Middle East lack the dynamic concept which makes Americans proud of their libraries and of the profession of librarian. The vicious "accountability law" which continues in force in many of the countries requires a librarian to pay from his own pocket for any books lost; so the librarian not unreasonably feels that circulation, far from being anything to encourage, is a source of personal danger. One of the fine contributions that United States Information Agency libraries have made

throughout the Middle East is in providing an example of a library for use; and the same may be said for certain other American libraries in the area, such as that at the American University of Beirut. Also, the USIA librarians, on their own time as well as officially, have been of substantial help in seeking to train librarians and develop the concept of librarianship in the local countries.

About thirty librarians from the Middle East countries have come to the U. S. on "leader-grants" of the State Department in the last three years, and about a dozen more under foundation and other auspices. Once again, the American Library Association must be praised for the trouble its members have taken to make the foreign librarians' stay in this country both helpful and pleasant.

The USIA library system—the linchpin of all American cultural activity overseas—includes twenty Information Center libraries in the area, and certain additions are being planned for the coming year. The book holdings are modest, about 130,000, but the annual attendance is 2,200,000 and the annual circulation 400,000. The library activity of USIA cannot be overvalued, and it is more extensive than the mere figures suggest. Special aspects of the work are referred to in other parts of this paper. Even the library program itself is wider than the Information Centers. Substantial permanent collections of American books are maintained in nine additional cities, and extensive use is also made of loan collections.

"Compulsory education" is in force in most countries of this area, and the school-leaving age is theoretically eleven to fourteen, or even higher in some cases. But because of shortage of teachers, of buildings, and of funds, only a fraction of the children of the appropriate age group are actually in school. Improvement has been made since 1945, but in that year for which reliable figures are available only 20% of school-age children were in school in Iraq, and only 47% in Egypt. The shortage of teachers is so great that, after the small supply of graduates of teachers colleges has been used up, and then secondary-school graduates, in some countries it is necessary to fill many of the teaching positions with men who have themselves had an education no higher than sixth grade. In a small country such as Kuwait, where heroic educational budgets are being used in an effort at moving suddenly from practically no education to a fully-developed system, reliance must be put largely on foreigners—usually Beirut and Cairo graduates—to fill the teaching staffs.

In spite of the large number of children kept out of school by insufficient teachers and buildings, there is a tendency in most Middle

American Books in the Middle East

East countries to "overbuild the top" of the educational system. There has been a flowering of higher education with all the outward forms of Western universities. Too often, however, the Middle East students in higher education are not selected as an elite, nor are appropriate plans made to use them as an elite after training. University education is on a mass-production, assembly-line basis as if there were universal literacy and elementary schooling.

University enrollments are large, for an incomplete educational system, and thousands and thousands of university graduates are coming out each year into an economy not yet developed so that it can use them. In Egypt, for instance, there are already many more lawyers than the country can use, yet the universities continue to grind out more by the thousand. This problem of the intellectual proletariat, the unemployed and frustrated intellectual—"Communist fodder"—is one of the most serious social and political problems of the Middle East.

Because of the inadequacy of the government schools, and the inability to enroll more than a fraction of the students seeking an education, private schools, both religious and secular, are important.

With only a few noteworthy exceptions, there is a dearth of school textbooks, for all levels, and those that are available are poorly printed, unimaginatively written and designed, and in general are based on no recognizable principles of pedagogy. There is a widespread and healthy dissatisfaction with present school textbooks, however, and a determination to make them better. Large credit for this must be given to the exchange-of-persons program and, more recently, to the International Cooperative Administration educational activity. Politics and corruption are dominant influences in the textbook situation in many Middle East countries, however, and improvement will be only gradual.

A high degree of centralized control of education is customary—and at present is undoubtedly necessary—and this has many attendant evils. But this has an advantage also: the influence of a few enlightened and forward-looking educational administrators is much stronger and more immediate than would be the case in a system enjoying the normal advantages of substantial local autonomy.

School libraries have been virtually unknown in the past, but there is a rapidly growing awareness of the need for supplementary material, both in general school collections and available for purchase by parents and children. Up to very recently the educational book which is not a textbook—one of the finest products of U. S. juvenile publish-

ing—has been non-existent in most countries of the Middle East, but the translation of such American books into local languages is now being urged and encouraged by various ministries of education.

The greatest obstacles to the sale of American books in the Middle East are: (1) low literacy and personal income; (2) high cost of American books in terms of the local economy; (3) shortage of dollar exchange; (4) ignorance of the area on the part of American book publishers, and hence their failure to give adequate service, either directly or through jobbing systems; (5) territorial restriction of markets; and (6) inadequate bookstore credit, aggravated by a general undercapitalization of bookstores.

Lack of copyright protection is not a serious problem as to the sale of American books in their English-language editions, presumably because the market has not been big enough for a particular title to encourage its piracy in English.

To the great credit of the Middle East, tariff is not an obstacle. With the possible exception of minor countries for which data are not available, no duty is charged on printed books anywhere in the Middle East, though there is duty on raw paper and in some cases on unbound sheets.

Censorship is not a serious problem in itself, though occasional books are held up with some frequency in one country or another. A by-product of the system of censorship has graver consequences in some countries: the possibility of delaying clearance of shipments opens the way for blackmail of importers and for other forms of corruption.

Although there are numerous exceptions, the norm in the Middle East is for a vertical structuring of the book trade—a single concern acting as printer, publisher, and bookseller. There are few jobbers in a full sense, though there are several concerns in each country with pretensions to that title. The gullible American publisher has lost both friends and sales on occasion through mistaking a fast-talking retailer for an actual jobber.

A peculiarity of the book trade in several countries is the effort of publisher-booksellers to try to corner the retail sale of the books they bring out, rather than let rival booksellers help enlarge the market—as if Scribner's should decline to let the Doubleday shops have copies of *From Here to Eternity*. This is of course a real obstacle to book trade development. Happily, the policy is not universal, and the lively young publishing industry in Iran goes to the opposite extreme, with auto-

American Books in the Middle East

matic barter-exchange of published books among all publishers, little money changing hands, and balances being struck through a kind of clearinghouse arrangement.

Of all the countries under review here, only five have genuine book publishing industries: Egypt, Lebanon, Turkey, Iran, Israel. Those five, however, have publishers who can show initiative, imagination, and commercial daring. They do not always display those admirable qualities, and there is too much inclination to watch for opportunities for sure-thing textbooks rather than to take enterprisers' risks in trade publishing, but basic competence is there.

The international aspects of publishing are especially important for publishers in Turkey and Israel, but are (or should be) in the Arab countries because of the need for pan-Arab distribution of books issued in the publishing centers of Cairo and Beirut; and in minor degree this is so in Iran because of the Persian-speaking market in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and certain communities in Iraq.

The importing booksellers of the Middle East form an able, energetic, and courageous group of businessmen. The leading booksellers of Cairo, Beirut, Amman, Baghdad are absolutely top-notch, and it is reported the same is true in Istanbul, Ankara, and Tel Aviv.

The only readily available statistics on American book exports are those of the Department of Commerce. These are notoriously unreliable because they omit book post shipments and all shipments under \$100 billing—two categories which are especially significant in under-developed areas. Even more important, for much of the time during the last decade, and for many of the countries under consideration, shortage of dollar exchange has forced Middle East booksellers to buy for sterling through another country instead of direct from the American publisher. Hence, a large part of the volume actually going to the Middle East has been routed through Britain or the Continent and has been inadvertently concealed in the Department of Commerce figures for the United Kingdom and in much smaller degree for the Netherlands and France. Even within the area of the Middle East there are confusions in the figures, resulting from the fact that Lebanon is an important gateway for American books destined for Jordan, Syria, Iraq; Egypt for the Sudan; and there is even a tiny volume for Afghanistan which goes through Pakistan.

Still another kind of modification must be made: where the dollar-exchange situation has changed sharply—as in Turkey through the inauguration of the Informational Media Guaranty plan, or in Egypt,

where the government is now granting import licenses freely—the figures for a past year cannot be taken as a dependable guide for the present.

And finally, the author agrees with many other observers who are convinced that neither past nor present volume is a proper indicator of the future potential. The volume will increase to some extent automatically, as a result of the educational and other influences described in this paper. But if American publishers make a reasonable effort toward giving the Middle East market the attention it deserves, and especially if government and private agencies lend the support which their different terms of reference will permit, the growth can be sensational.

The major influences and agencies bringing about the publication of American books in translation into Middle East languages are: (1) the USIA translation programs in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, and Hebrew; (2) the translation program of a non-profit corporation, Franklin Publications, in Arabic and Persian; (3) translation programs of Ministries of Education, notably in Egypt and Turkey; (4) several other locally-sponsored translation programs, some quite ambitious as to the future, such as that of the Arab League in Cairo, or a projected "library of world literature" sponsored by a member of the royal family in Iran; (5) the inclination on the part of commercial publishers, especially in Egypt, Lebanon, and Iran, to pirate American books, chiefly by "name" authors, whose works they think will be automatically popular; (6) some stimulus and financial help from Communist and other left-wing groups toward publication of works which will confirm the Soviet image of America; (7) not important as yet, but the influence of ICA missions is beginning to appear. There has as yet been no known instance of an American commercial publisher adapting and translating textbooks for use in a Middle East school system comparable to the projects of the Silver Burdett Company in West and East Pakistan.

No dependable figures as to the number of books translated from English, or indeed from any languages, are available. None of the countries treated here contributes the required data to the useful *Index Translationum* published by Unesco. However, from the known publications sponsored by USIA and by Franklin Publications in their respective programs, and from known other translations (some authorized but more pirated), the following estimates may be given for translations of American books in 1955 and 1956:

American Books in the Middle East

	1955	1956
Arabic	66	80
Persian	45	70
Turkish	30	30
Hebrew	15	20
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	156	200

Detailed comment is made in connection with the recommendations, but for the record it should be stated that the chief activities of the U. S. government in this general field are:

USIA: American libraries; book presentation; translation programs; bi-national centers, including English classes conducted there; exhibits; mention of American books in press and radio; the IMG program; and (of great importance) contact with the leaders of local intellectual and educational life in connection with USIA's overseas administration of the exchange-of-persons program for the State Department; and numerous other activities.

ICA: A certain amount of book presentation; assistance to Ministries of Education in developing textbook programs based on American models; assistance to library-science and teacher-training projects; sponsorship of U.S. Book Exchange aid to libraries in the area; influence on library collections through the "university contracts" between American and local universities; and the highly valuable person-to-person influence of opposite-number specialist teams in many fields.

The Ford Foundation directs its work in the Middle East from an office in Beirut manned by three Americans who do a substantial amount of traveling in the area. The Rockefeller Foundation's Cairo office is concerned primarily with work in the field of health, but an associate director of the Division of Humanities makes regular trips to the Middle East. Much of the activity of both foundations bears on the subject of books in one way or another, although the chief specific connections have been:

Rockefeller: substantial grants to libraries for book purchase (about \$100,000 in the Middle East in four years); support of programs of American studies at several universities; aid to the development of librarianship and bibliography; and a grant of \$13,000 to the American Uni-

versity of Beirut for Arabic translations from Western languages.

Ford: assistance to University of Ankara in establishing an Institute of Library Science, including personnel, supplies, equipment; U. S. training for librarians from Turkey, Egypt, Lebanon and Iran; also "the Foundation is looking into possibilities of aiding libraries in other parts of the Near East, and a few proposals for aid to publication in the area."

The Near East Foundation places large emphasis on village development programs, which involve literacy training as well as certain forms of vocational education. Both have important implications for book-reading in the future but not for the immediate present.

The Iran Foundation has thus far confined its work to the field of health and has not yet embarked on programs, even in that field, involving books in significant quantities.

The work of the American colleges and universities in the Middle East can scarcely be over-estimated. For decades the American University of Beirut was an almost solitary beacon of enlightenment in the Arab world, and Robert College in Istanbul, Alborz College in Tehran, and other similar institutions did more for book reading and (in spite of missionary connections) for disinterested secular education in general than present-day Middle Easterners are inclined to remember. The importance of these universities is relatively less at the present time because of the increased number and vigor of purely local institutions, but those which are continuing are still powerful influences for educational progress and especially for introducing American books to readers in the Middle East.

CARE distributes the "American Bookshelf" of selected paper-bound books, in addition to serving as agent for other public and quasi-public book programs.

Of the private business firms active in the Middle East, Aramco is outstanding for its contribution to education in Saudi Arabia, and it has also taken an intelligent interest in encouraging the development of a local book trade. Aramco's work as a teacher of English cannot fail to have an effect, in the long run, on the reading of American books by Saudi Arabians, though the immediate effect is of course greatest at the lowest level of simple educational material, especially of a practical sort.

The American Committee for Cultural Freedom, a private anti-Communist organization which is allied with similar groups in Europe

American Books in the Middle East

in seeking to counter the activities of the various Communist "cultural" congresses and associations, has announced plans for the subsidized export of selected American paper-bound books in English for sale by the regular book trade in the foreign countries.

The somewhat controversial American Friends of the Middle East has given considerable attention to cultural interchange in general, but little specifically to books.

Missionary publishing and bookselling, for instance by the Presbyterian Mission in Tehran, is of some importance, and sometimes includes a certain amount of secular material as well as that directly in line with the objectives of the sponsoring organization. But the circulation of such books, whether in English or translation, tends to be limited to the Christian minority without substantial impact on the rest of the literate population. Many other private groups are active in various ways.

The British Council, which at one time had a full and varied program, is proceeding on a much more restricted basis now, because of lack of funds. The wartime system of guaranteeing British publishers' consignment sales to foreign booksellers has been completely abandoned. In the countries where British official influence continues in marked degree (Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrein, Aden) the sale of British educational books is considerable. There are occasional examples—for instance in Iran in connection with the English language text *Essential English*—of local printing of British books by arrangement with the original publisher or in outright piracy. In general, Britain's overt official activity is largely on broad cultural lines—library, concerts, lectures.

There is a significant volume of sale of French books in the Middle East—chiefly in the French language, but recently to some extent also in translation, the latter especially in the field of attractively illustrated children's books. In Lebanon and Syria, and to a degree in Egypt and Iran, the French give emphasis to high cultural activities such as learned institutes and lectures and handsomely printed scholarly monographs. In the French area of North Africa, French opposition to the import of non-French books, including Arabic books from Cairo, as well as American and British books is reported.

Because the Communist Party is currently outlawed or in high official disfavor in nearly all of the countries under review, the volume of directly Russian-sponsored material which observers reported in a past period is not now visible. But that does not mean that Communist publishing activity has been abandoned. Classical Marxism has never been very important in the Middle East, and the effective line followed

in the past is still useful: hyper-nationalism, down with the imperialists, defend Islam from Western godlessness, etc. These are doctrines and slogans sincerely espoused by many a sincere anti-Communist in the Middle East; and it is therefore possible to take a Communist line without seeming to do so, and to do it for non-Communist reasons. Although numerous anti-American books and books serving the Party interests are continuing to appear, they are not usually Communist in appearance, and the names of Marx and the Russian leaders are rarely mentioned. Beirut is the chief locus of Party-line publishing in Arabic, but there is some of it in half a dozen other publishing centers. In general these books pass through normal commercial channels and sell at normal going rates. Some of the publishers of these works in Beirut have also brought out anti-Communist material, and their friends offer the excuse that they are merely trying to get on in the world and will do anything for a buck. The volume of Russian-printed material—in Arabic, French, English, and even a few items in Armenian—which is said to follow a route through Bulgaria to Beirut and thence to the rest of the Middle East, is believed to be not nearly so important as it once was. In Iran, where Tudeh Party publishing and bookselling was the biggest cultural activity in the country a few years ago, the Party's current clandestine publishing gains a psychological importance out of proportion to its volume because of its saucy impudence in popping up again after having been suppressed.

In considering Soviet vs. U.S. cultural activity, there is always the danger of coming to feel it is a kind of international popularity contest. But the interest of the United States should not be to persuade the Middle East that Americans are fine fellows. Rather, the whole effort should be directed toward helping the Middle East to attain the intellectual and moral and spiritual strength which gives the insight to expose Communist hypocrisy, just as economic strength gives the inner fiber which prevents countries from being pushed around in other ways. Mere client nations, without the inner strength, would be of small value to this country when the chips are down, no matter what fine views of America they may hold, and no matter how gratifying it may be to American representatives in the field or their principals at home to chalk up technical points scored against the enemy in the international popularity game.

Needs and Recommendations

USIA libraries deserve strengthening in book funds and staff, and in some cases improvement in location or in the nature of the buildings

American Books in the Middle East

in which they are housed. Also, there should be additional libraries at a number of points outside the capital cities, and additional funds, staff, and facilities for aid to other libraries. No other official American cultural activity overseas compares in importance with this basic need for continuing and extending the almost universally praised work of the USIA libraries.

In addition, there is need for more specialized kinds of American libraries under other sponsorship.

ICA needs—but not in all cases does it have—good professional working libraries in education, agriculture, health, and other specific fields in which it has a large stake but for which there is not sufficient local use to justify USIA in diverting large amounts of its limited funds which are intended for more general readers. It should be noted, however, that ICA spent about \$500,000 for books in fiscal 1955 (\$60,000 in the Middle East), including the presentations to individuals mentioned below.

The same need for professional working libraries in the fields of military aid should also be noted. Provision of such libraries as part of a general program of military aid—along with hardware, raw materials, and technical staff—would seem an obvious requirement, but to a large extent our military aid missions are missing this opportunity altogether or are dependent upon USIA. It may well be that USIA, already in the “library business,” is better equipped to serve this function; but if so military-aid funds should bear the cost so that a new responsibility does not attenuate the effectiveness with which USIA discharges its basic responsibility.

There are already a number of American libraries under private sponsorship in the Middle East, and there could perhaps be additions. Examples are the excellent research library on Arabia maintained in Dhahran by Aramco; the small library of the American Mission (Presbyterian) in Tehran; and the libraries of the American-sponsored universities such as Beirut, Cairo, etc. For the most part these libraries are for special purposes, and not always open to the public, but they do increase substantially the availability of American books in the area. Any extension of this service which the private organizations can justify within their own terms of reference is of course to be welcomed.

There are almost limitless possibilities for USIA, ICA, foundations, private organizations interested in particular fields, American corporations with interests in the Middle East, and military aid missions. This procedure of presenting books to other libraries has disadvantages (lack of control being the chief), but is useful because of its flexibility

(no particular number of volumes being necessary); its avoidance of continuing commitment for staff, rent, etc.; its almost universal approval by local governments and people, even in cases where the opening of additional American libraries might be unacceptable at particular times and places; and the fact that the recipient institutions can be of every sort—from school and public libraries to army staff schools, medical and engineering colleges, labor unions, and in-service training programs for government administrators. Through arrangements recently completed, ICA is sponsoring in the Middle East the work of the U.S. Book Exchange in providing material for local libraries. The greatest unexploited opportunity along this line is in encouraging private organizations and military-aid missions to supplement what has already been done by USIA and, in more limited degree, by ICA. But there is also need for continuation and extension of this activity by every agency.

USIA has made highly effective use of this device, but should have funds to do even more, especially in the case of impressive American works of special interest to the Middle East. ICA and most foundations which sponsor American trips by local scholars and other specialists usually provide a certain sum for the individual to purchase books in his field to take home with him. The same principle should be followed in the case of every foreigner making a sponsored trip to the U.S., whether under military or other auspices; and there could probably be a great deal more presentation of books to specialists in the other countries, even if a trip is not involved.

A special possibility which might be explored by the USIA Division of Private Cooperation is the encouragement of American corporations with Middle East offices to use American books, whether in English or in translation when available, instead of cigarette lighters and less creditable items as presents for local employees and business friends.

In addition to the specifically American translation programs—the largest of which are those of the USIA and of Franklin Publications—there are a number of others in the Middle East. These include the Arab League cultural section; the Egyptian Ministry of Education; the Turkish Ministry of Education; and a new program sponsored by a member of the Iranian royal family. These latter, of course, are not confined to American books, but the sponsors are entirely willing to have a proper American representation. However, they are usually so unfamiliar with American books that the list of titles tends to draw largely on British and French; and the rare American works chosen

American Books in the Middle East

are frequently selected by chance rather than as a result of careful study. One of the most useful services that an American organization can perform is to supply these local translating organizations with sample copies of books in the fields in which they are interested, and—where desired—the comment of competent authorities on the virtues and shortcomings of each. This is an opportunity which should be seized whenever it presents itself to USIA, to ICA (this would usually be in a technical field such as education or health), to Franklin Publications, or to a foundation.

Piracy is rife in every Middle Eastern country except Turkey and Israel. Scarcely a handful of authorized translations of American books has even been published commercially in Arabic or Persian aside from those in the programs of USIA and of Franklin Publications. This is only partly because of imperfect copyright legislation and publishers' confusion between *meum* and *tuum*. Most publishers have no idea how to go about securing authorized rights; and some who have done it have been discouraged from doing it again by the naive or unreasonable demand for fees by the American proprietor of the rights. In the case of official programs such as those of the Arab League and the Ministries of Education, there is usually no intention to pirate a book; but the fee demanded by the American proprietors, or often the failure of the American proprietor even to respond to an inquiry, persuades the people in the other country that securing the rights for American books is always "difficult."

USIA has frequently helped by securing authorized translation rights for books not in its own publication program.

Obviously the requirement under this head is to show that if a local commercial publisher or government-sponsored program wishes to include an American book on its list, authorized rights can be secured with reasonable speed and at a reasonable price. This function is performed and should be continued and extended by USIA, by Franklin Publications, and in rare special cases by certain foundations and even private corporations.

American book publishers, authors, and other proprietors of rights have an important contribution to make through the prompt, business-like, and reasonable handling of requests for rights when they are received; and through recognition of the difference of the book economy of the Middle Eastern languages from that of languages such as French, Spanish, and German. Too often, American proprietors may have noted that they got \$500 for French rights to a certain book and

fail to realize that \$50 may be an equally generous offer for Arabic—quite aside from the fact that it is a moral victory to get anything for rights in a Middle East language.

As noted above, there is a certain amount of publishing of translations of American books by official government agencies of Middle East countries, and a small amount, usually pirated, by commercial publishers entirely on their own. The largest amount of translated publishing, however, has been sponsored by USIA and by Franklin Publications. An example of foundation activity in this area was the project at the American University of Beirut with support from the Rockefeller Foundation; also the Ford Foundation reports that it is considering the need for publications in local languages, and presumably some of this would be in translation.

It is incontrovertible that USIA, ICA, all foundations active in the area, private companies with an interest in the Middle East, and even military-aid missions all have their special reasons for furthering publication of American books in translation. Whether as their own operation or by grant to another organization, all of these agencies should continue and extend their work in this field. American publishers should aid the effort by granting rights on reasonable terms—and this not merely for patriotic reasons but also because widespread publication of American books in translation cannot fail to increase the export sale of American books in regular English-language editions.

There is almost unbelievable ignorance, throughout the Middle East, of American books, even on the part of intelligent Western-educated specialists who have a good acquaintance with British and French books. The surgeon-general of a Middle East air force does not know U.S. books in aviation medicine; a student of nationalism does not know the writings of Hans Kohn; a professor of English literature has never heard of Emily Dickinson; a philosopher of religion does not know Paul Tillich. Middle Easterners cannot be expected to want American books if they don't even know of their existence. The author remembers a question of a not unintelligent Pakistani, "Mr. Smith, is it true that there are no bookshops in America and that you get all of your books from the U.K.?"

USIA libraries throughout the area do a magnificent job of having basic bibliographical information available, and show ingenuity and energy in presenting it to people who inquire for it; but only in rare special cases (e.g., the occasion of the Atomic Energy Conference) do they have the funds or staff to take the initiative of offering it without solicitation, or of doing the sweepingly comprehensive job that the

American Books in the Middle East

circumstances require. Foundations have financed bibliographical work in special fields, and this is sometimes true of private companies such as Aramco also. Military-aid missions appear to have done practically nothing in the way of supplying bibliographical information in spite of the relatively high literacy and education of the officer class, and their manifest eagerness to know about American books. American book publishers, who for years did a discredibly poor job of informing the Middle East of the books they had for sale—and were rewarded with correspondingly poor sales—have shown many evidences in the last five years of meeting the challenge more adequately. There should be much more widespread distribution through the whole area of every kind of bibliographical tool, and not merely for the use of booksellers. Through the imaginative help of both the USIA and the H. M. Snyder Co., seasonal announcement numbers of *Publishers' Weekly* now go to a number of booksellers in the area, but the Middle East also needs the *New York Times Book Review*, the *Saturday Review*, *U.S. Quarterly Book Review*, publishers' catalogs in profusion, selected bibliographies in dozens of fields, and more copies of *Books in Print*, *Publishers Trade List Annual*, *Cumulative Book Index*, the *Hawkins Bibliography of Technical Books*, etc. Best of all, if it could be financed, would be a monthly bulletin on new books.

There are many reasons why there should be wider distribution of American scholarly journals and other special publications in the Middle East, but the immediate concern—improving the distribution and effectiveness of American books abroad—is sufficient justification by itself. There are too many Middle East professors of history who never see the *American Historical Review*, too many students of Muslim art who have never even heard of *Ars Orientalia*, and so on through almost every field in which the U.S. has one of the outstanding journals. There are mechanical difficulties in giving subscriptions, for once started how can they be stopped. However, if USIA or a foundation could make a provision for accepting subscriptions in local currency, perhaps at a reduced rate made possible for this plus-business by the journal publishers, this would bring about an enormous widening of familiarity with American books. American corporations already make some effort toward supplying local employees with relevant journals, but both they and military-aid missions could do much more.

There has been such general recognition in the last year of the importance of American participation in foreign book exhibits that it is necessary merely to mention the now agreed principle that U.S. books should be represented in every major national book fair, and undoubt-

edly in many other exhibits in addition. It might be noted, however, that Americans are continuing to miss the opportunity of displaying books in trade fairs, even when a category "technical and scientific books" is included in the plan of the fair.

ICA has many opportunities to arrange or assist special book exhibits, especially in the field of education; and foundations can sometimes initiate exhibits in connection with more general projects which they are sponsoring. Even exhibits of American books on military subjects (in the broad modern definition of the concept to include physical and economic geography, international politics, certain branches of sociology, etc.) might well be considered by military-aid missions.

Whatever the sponsoring agency, American publishers have a high responsibility to aid this effort by giving priority service to the orders, and by providing the books at maximum discounts in those cases in which gratis presentation cannot be justified.

Book-reviewing media in the Middle East are not numerous. Wherever there are opportunities to encourage existing literary journals, or to suggest addition of a book section to an existing medium, this should be done by any of the agencies concerned. Regular supply of bibliographical information to the editors of such journals is an obvious requirement; many of them are able to use "canned reviews"—a not unworthy device when the review takes the form of factual summary or description, rather than pretended critical judgment. And all editors are pleased to receive review copies. U.S. publishers, being unfamiliar with the quality and special interests of Middle East newspapers and magazines, and not even knowing whether they ever publish reviews, are usually quite unable to select wisely the media which should receive review copies, or even to screen the occasional requests coming in from the field. A highly useful service for USIA to perform, if it were given the staff and funds to make it possible, would be (1) to compile lists of the most important reviewers and reviewing media for the information of interested publishers; (2) to suggest to publishers of particular new books where certain review copies might be sent; (3) to make use of the Presentation Program for supplying review copies in the cases in which this may be important from the point of view of cultural interchange, even if not justifiable on commercial grounds.

Everything that advances literacy, education, or interest in America advances the cause of American books. The following is little more than a checklist of some of the more fundamental steps which are already being taken and which should be encouraged, strengthened, and

American Books in the Middle East

extended at every opportunity by every agency. The fact that these are long-range does not imply that they are of a low order of importance. In fact, these measures are basic and essential prerequisites to almost everything else presented in the paper.

Help should obviously be given by every agency, public and private, to this most basic of all measures for the development of book readers. The effort should not be confined to any one instrument, whether local, American, or international.

This step at which the new literate, just able to read, is led progressively to higher stages is, in the opinion of many observers, the stage of the road from illiteracy to book-reading which is least well taken care of. The pyrotechnics of the publicity accompanying special-interest mass literacy campaigns have obscured the fact that there is little available material on which the new literates can exercise their newly acquired talent. There is great need for simplest works, and of course these must be in the local language, not English. However, translations—preferably heavily adapted—of some of the excellent “easy reading” American books and booklets can be highly useful.

Special note should be taken by military-aid missions of the fact that nearly all military establishments in the Middle East have made the elimination of illiteracy and the conduct of at least some form of mass education a matter of basic policy. This is not to say that all are approaching the problem intelligently or meeting it effectively, but the desire is there.

For influence on the reading habits of the coming generation, nothing can equal the importance of teacher-training. This is especially the case in the Middle East, where the great recent acceleration in educational development means that the educated population can be increased 100% not in a generation or a decade but in just a few years.

ICA is giving justified major attention to teacher-training, and its work should be supplemented at every opportunity by every other agency.

Textbooks for teacher-training in the local languages are almost desperately needed, and they are particularly easy to do without disturbing local interest and without involvement in politics or corruption, as the quantities are small enough to prevent teacher-training books from being commercial plums—unlike the case with elementary textbooks. USIA has produced some books of use in teacher-training, and Franklin Publications has done quite a number, including a large series of popular pamphlets intended for both parents and teachers. In teacher-training, as in other fields, ICA hopes to sponsor the adapta-

tion and translation of books which will extend, in both time and space, the useful contributions it is making through its "university contracts."

In connection with all of the above, it should be noted that American educational ideas are particularly acceptable to most professional educators in most Middle East countries. Even the people who do not like American international politics or art or literature tend to be convinced that America knows more about "education for everyone" than any other nation.

Exchange-of-persons programs under ICA, State Department, foundation, local government, or other auspices are of high value—both the visits to the area by American specialists and the trips for study and observation in the U.S. by teachers and educational administrators from the local country. These should be continued at all costs.

Although English is a required subject in at least some grades of most of the school systems in the area, and is even the language of instruction in some subjects such as university-level science, there are many literates who drop out of school before English is reached, and in any event hundreds of thousands of adult literates have no English. There is accordingly a great demand for instruction in English. In the past the chief contribution along this line has been by the British Council and by the American and British educational institutions in Beirut, Cairo, Istanbul, Tehran, etc. In recent years, however, USIA has joined in accepting the challenge and at nearly every post is doing at least something to meet the problem. In Tehran, the Iran-America Society is highly successful, with a changing student body in the English classes numbering almost 1,000 at all times; and in Turkey the binational center at Ankara has branches in three other cities. USIA reports having sent 16,000 English-teaching textbooks to our area in 1955. Major English-teaching projects are being carried out or planned by USIA in Afghanistan, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, and Syria.

It must be noted, however, that British texts for English teaching are used almost exclusively throughout the Middle East—the Michael West series and *Essential English* being the books most frequently encountered. There are occasional small adoptions of American books for English teaching, but the volume is tiny in comparison with the British total. A graded series of instruction books in American English, specifically intended for learners of a particular local tongue—Arabic or Persian or Turkish—would have immediate popularity and usefulness, according to information repeatedly offered by local educators, booksellers, and USIA and ICA personnel in the field.

American Books in the Middle East

The USIA, the International Relations Board of the American Library Association, ICA, and foundations have made important contributions toward this basic responsibility. Schools of library science have been founded in Cairo and Ankara. Library associations have been formed in Egypt and Turkey, and there has been a small but distinguished group of American librarians in the Middle East under Fulbright and other auspices, as well as a number of Middle Easterners brought to the U.S. for training. This subject, of basic importance to the general question of American books abroad as well as to education generally, deserves much fuller treatment than it can receive here. Suffice to say that librarians have perhaps done more—both on their own and as advisers to government units—than any other group of non-official Americans to further the cause of reading and of enlightenment in the Middle East. Their own work should be encouraged, and their professional advice should be sought, by every agency with an interest in the field.

Although trained personnel and adequate book funds are much more serious lacks than masonry, there are some cases in which a building, and its equipment, is the *sine qua non*. There are perhaps opportunities in such cases for ICA, for foundations, or for companies with an interest in the particular country.

American history and American literature are virtually unknown in all countries of the Middle East, and in both subjects America has been treated as an unworthy and not very interesting appendage of Britain. Yet there is a great eagerness to learn all about America, and university courses in either subject would meet with a cordial response. There are opportunities for testing or aiding a plan of this sort under various exchange-of-persons programs, or as a foundation project. The Rockefeller Foundation has done this at the University of Istanbul and University of Ankara.

Although the point is obvious, it is perhaps worth stating specifically that greater acquaintance with American art and music are in themselves important factors in encouraging interest in American books, and everything that can be done toward increasing the number of American concerts and exhibitions is of interest in relation to books as well as for their own valid usefulness.

Mention has been made above of travel for teachers and librarians, and they deserve special notice because of their unexampled position for influencing others. Mention will be made below of the similar importance of travel by Middle East booksellers. But it is clear that every kind of student brings back bibliographical impressions, information,

and ideas of great value after an American trip, especially if he can be supplied funds for book purchase. Even failing that, however, continuation of American visits by Middle Easterners of every sort—from police officers to philosophers—is the surest way of supplying bibliographical information to the area in a way in which it can become effective.

Maintenance of contact with the chief learned or professional society in a particular specialist's field is of importance not only in encouraging the scholar to set and maintain creditable standards for himself and his students, but also specifically in informing him about American books. The easiest and least formal way of doing this is through scholarly journals, but it would be best if some of the basic learned societies could accept the challenge to help their brothers in other countries in the same way that the American Library Association has.

The total number of Middle Easterners who have had some period of time at an American university is substantial, and in view of the relatively small total size of the educated elite in any Middle East country they hold an influential position. The plan of the American Alumni Council to secure free subscriptions to alumni magazines for foreign alumni, though of marginal importance to the immediate question of books, deserves encouragement. USIA personnel have usefully aided such organizations of Middle East alumni as the Egyptian-American University Fellowship and the Turkish-American University Association; and, in Baghdad, USIA publishes an alumni magazine called *Amgrad*.

America is unusually fortunate in having the distinguished members of the National Book Committee willing to serve the public interest in the way they do. In no Middle East country is there even the semblance of a disinterested group which can represent the cause of books without the charge of axe-grinding. There is little enough cooperation among book-sellers or among publishers, and the national influence of librarians in the Middle East at the present time is close to zero. Formation of national book committees might be easier than one would guess at first because of the relatively high proportion of scholars and other bookish people in important positions in government, industry, and even the army.

Of the specific and practical aids to the sale of American books in the countries where IMG is operative, nothing else can compare with it in importance. This plan, which permits the local bookseller to pay for his American purchases in local currency, has been sensationally

American Books in the Middle East

successful in Israel and is just starting in Turkey. An IMG agreement was signed with Egypt but has never become operative. However, the discussion of IMG was perhaps responsible for the recent Egyptian freeing of exchange for book imports.

It was believed at first that the tremendous sale in Israel in the first year of IMG's operation was explained in part by the need to fill the pipeline, but business during the last year was even greater, partly because of an exchange arrangement of the Israeli government which makes books a retail bargain. Even if that should be changed, it is believed by some observers that there may be a continuing business of about \$1,000,000 per year for American books in Israel as long as IMG continues. Israel has high literacy, widespread knowledge of English, and a high percentage of book-minded people in the population; so it is not anticipated that IMG would have a similar flowering anywhere else. But it is believed that perhaps \$250,000 worth of American books will move into Turkey under IMG in the coming year. Needless to say, IMG should be continued, and it should be extended to other countries in the area if it develops that their exchange problems are such that books cannot enter by other means.

Lebanon has an entirely free money market, and to some extent can thus act as a gateway for other Arab countries, especially Syria, Jordan, and Iraq, though this has disadvantages also, as the Lebanese are skilled at levying tribute as the books pass through, thus raising the selling price in the other countries. (Syria's exchange likewise, is free, but technical local rules prevent the country from serving as a "gateway".) But elsewhere in the Middle East there are exchange problems which, in varying degree in different countries and at different times, hinder or almost block the flow of American books and increase the retail prices of those that do get through. Black-market purchase of dollars of course raises costs greatly; and wherever black or gray operations are involved there is a special opportunity for corruption, so that bribes to officials supposedly enforcing exchange control increase costs still more.

At the moment, Egypt, which is the best book market in the Arab world, is allowing dollar exchange for book imports quite freely, but for much of the time in the last three years exchange has been very hard to get. Purchase for sterling through London or Amsterdam has provided a route at times, but often (as also in Turkey during the period just happily ended by the starting of IMG) even sterling exchange has been lacking.

Every legal means should be used to remove exchange barriers

when they appear. There may be occasions in which it would be proper and not indelicate for our government to suggest to the local government that books should be on a more favorable exchange rate in cases where there are two or more rates for different categories of goods; sometimes the American publisher can find a legitimate use for local currency himself; sometimes third-country operations are legally possible; and perhaps there may be cases in which American corporations in the Middle East may feel justified in providing dollar exchange to help a local bookseller import more American books.

It should be noted, incidentally, that the Unesco book coupon plan, theoretically so helpful, involves so much red tape in actual use that, except for large bulk orders from government institutions (which would probably be able to get an exchange allowance anyway), the scheme is not of great practical value.

The proposed reduction of U.S. international book postage rates would be a useful contribution toward reducing the selling price of American books, and hence toward increasing sales. Every effort should be made to achieve a lower rate; and to permit shipments of greater bulk would be equally important.

It should be added that, whatever the rate, the U.S. publisher can make a large contribution of his own by care, forethought, and ingenuity in the planning and handling of shipments. For this purpose it is of course essential for him to understand the problems of the importer.

Long credit is essential in international book trade. Few booksellers have enough capital to make substantial purchases "for stock" (that is, books for which a buyer is not immediately in sight). In fact, most importers in the Middle East have a hard time getting enough capital to permit the tying up of funds in letters of credit, or to pay sight drafts on delivery even for assured orders. The exporter, on the other hand, is humanly reluctant to grant any open credit—let alone the 120 days which is probably required in most cases—to a bookseller he has never met, and who writes funny English on an outlandish letterhead from an area noted for continuing economic troubles and political fireworks. Yet there are numerous booksellers in the area who can be trusted, and the publishers who have taken the trouble to distinguish them from the others have found that the granting of reasonable credit has paid dividends.

But merely to grant credit in limited amounts to the booksellers who deserve it is not a complete solution, and certainly does not permit any substantial amount of buying "for stock." One special form of granting credit which would increase American book sales enormously—some

American Books in the Middle East

observers think a doubling or tripling might result—would be a system of “consignment” or “protection” (i.e., guaranteed return privilege), but the practical obstacles are immense. A plan could be worked by the government along the lines of the British Council operation during the war, that being essentially a plan under which the government guarantees the exporter and importer against loss in connection with stock remaining unsold in the foreign bookstores after a certain time. But such a scheme would be costly and administratively complex, unless applied to a very limited number of titles (which in itself would tend to defeat the purposes of the plan), and the question would always remain of what to do with the stock of books which would be taken over from the bookseller when remaining unsold after a given period. Most American publishers would dislike the idea of wholesale gratis distribution or cut-rate sale of large numbers of copies of a title; yet deliberate destruction of the books seems psychologically impossible.

The author of this article regrets that he does not have a solution of the problem. But he wishes to emphasize that anyone who does can make one of the most effective of all contributions to the cause of American books abroad. Pending any over-all solution, individual publishers can aid both their business and our national interest whenever they find that, for particular titles or with particular booksellers, they are able to allow any kind of “consignment” or “protection” privilege.

No over-all formula can be given, but anyone who has talked with Middle East booksellers knows that differences in publishers' procedure in these matters can make a major difference to the importer—in saving him time and money in clearance of shipments and in the actual cost of accounting and making remittances. Study of specific measures should be a major responsibility of the “Study of the Book Trade.”

The need for providing regular and continuing bibliographical information is mentioned above. But in addition American publishers need to overhaul their whole attitude toward the foreign market. Some few publishers already recognize the importance of this both for their business and their country, and they are being rewarded accordingly. But the vast majority of American publishers still regard foreign trade as a nuisance; and some few of them engage in irresponsibilities in which they would never indulge when dealing with a U.S. bookseller. Almost all of these annoyances are automatically taken care of when publishers' representatives call on stores in the area

because then the evils are brought directly to their attention by the suffering bookseller.

American authors and publishers, when selling rights to British publishers, frequently toss in the Middle East as an exclusive territory for the British publisher—sometimes of necessity in hard bargaining and sometimes thoughtlessly and without necessity. An outsider cannot intrude on the questions of commercial necessity, and it must be granted that in many cases a British edition selling at a low price does indeed maximize distribution of an American work in the Middle East. But it must be said that by an exclusive arrangement the American publisher is prevented from selling the area, even if the British book is out-of-print or never presented to the Middle East trade; and that in cases where there is a price differential the lower-priced British book will have its automatic advantage in an open market anyway. It seems to the disinterested observer that whenever it is commercially feasible to keep the Middle East as a non-exclusive open market it is to the general advantage of American books to follow that policy rather than to impose artificial territorial restrictions which at best complicate life for both importer and exporter and at worst completely prevent acquisition of the book by the Middle East.

The reference is not to the American concerns which act as export jobbers, but to local book importers who serve, or purport to serve, as jobbers supplying an entire country or area. No more should be said under this head than that numerous cases have been known in the past in which a bookseller without either the desire or the ability to act as a wholesaler has fooled an American publisher by his claims and, by allowing other retailers a niggardly discount or no discount whatever, has actually reduced outlets instead of increasing them. The items below on Study of Book Trade and Publishers' Representatives are relevant here, because the error of injudicious jobbing arrangements which permit one store to get a corner on the retail trade will be taken care of automatically as America learns more about the handling of books in the Middle East.

Promotion is extraordinarily cheap in all Middle East countries, and because it is relatively unknown it makes more impression and produces more results than a comparable effort here. Only occasionally will it be worthwhile for an American publisher to share promotion costs with a Middle East bookseller, but in some cases this would be justified. Circulars on particular titles or special-subject catalogs can sometimes be used by Middle East booksellers; and there are even times when it would be worth while for the American publisher to

American Books in the Middle East

share the cost of newspaper or magazine advertising. At the least the bookseller's own promotion could be aided and stimulated. Here again is an example of the advantage of regular visits by publishers' representatives.

As far as personal competence is concerned, the best twenty-five booksellers in the Middle East are probably abler than most U. S. booksellers. But there is much that they do not know, and regarding which they are eager for help and advice, especially in connection with promotion and with window-dressing and all forms of display on the selling floor. It would be a splendid development if the American Booksellers Association should take responsibility for aiding foreign booksellers in underdeveloped areas in the same way the American Library Association is helping foreign libraries. There would be immediate usefulness for a brief manual, with photographs, diagrams, and perhaps even carpenter's plans, on the general subject of book display; and booklets on other bookselling subjects would likewise be welcome. Trips to the U. S. by booksellers are extremely useful, as has been evident in two recent cases arranged by USIA on the State Department's behalf.

All booksellers, including those in America, think that if publishers would only increase discount all other problems in the world would solve themselves. This is disputed by publishers. In any event, each publisher must decide for himself what discount he can allow, and it is proper here merely to record the obvious fact that the high cost of American books (in terms of the local economy and especially in comparison with books from Britain and the Continent) is a major obstacle to sale; and that the simplest way of lowering the retail selling price is to lower the wholesale price. Whether the increase in number of copies sold will be sufficient to offset the loss of income per book is a question which must be decided by the publisher according to normal commercial criteria in each case. The only other alternative (aside from the special projects described in the next paragraph) would be an outright across-the-board export subsidy, which would be extremely costly to the government as well as distasteful to most publishers, and perhaps harmful to general American relations in various countries.

One large American publisher makes it a regular policy to regard any substantial foreign sale of a book as "plus business;" and he therefore allows an especially large discount on foreign sales of certain titles. For those books he makes an overrun at the time of the original printing and, in fixing the discount for foreign sale, he considers only

the overrun cost plus royalty plus modest profit, excluding the portion of preparation and plant cost which those copies would normally have to carry. Other publishers are experimenting with production of English-language reprints, produced at low cost in the area, as a means of reaching the large market from which they have been entirely shut off because of comparative costs.

On every count it is important to have a substantial increase in the number of American bookmen who visit the area. Some few publishers can afford a full-time traveling representative making regular visits to the Middle East, if necessary combining this assignment with coverage of other areas. In other cases, groups of publishers or American export jobbers can maintain traveling representatives. The start of wisdom in the international book trade is to visit the area which you hope to sell. Not until there is a substantial number of American bookmen who know the Middle East will it be possible to assess the merits of suggestions such as those made in this article.

The combined results of observations by publishers' own representatives are indispensable. But, as a supplement and also as a means of getting a point of view broader than publishing alone, there should be an over-all, top-to-bottom study of the Middle East book world under some such disinterested auspices as those of a private foundation.

All sources of information should be tapped. For instance, economic attachés in American embassies could assist in this study. They have in the past been generally uninformed on all aspects of the book trade, and it would be hoped that a high-level policy directive might call their attention to the national importance—including over-all commercial importance—of books and other cultural and informational media, in spite of the relatively small direct dollar volume in comparison with other commodities. Each of the points mentioned in this article, as well as the many overlooked, should be studied intensively and the results made available to publishers, export jobbers, foundations, and all organizations interested in the Middle East or the general question of American books abroad.