



ALGERIA AND MOROCCO TRIP REPORT

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I. Background of International Book Fairs in Algeria and Morocco

Salon International du livre d'Alger (SILA) or the Algiers International Book Fair, begun in 1995, realized its 9th annual incarnation at the Palace of Culture of Algiers from September 8-18, 2004. The Fair had two official themes: recognition of the work of Franz Fanon and recognition of the importance of children's books. Of the 587 publishers who participated in the Fair, 91 were Algerian, 42 European, and 224 were Arab. So far as Sabre has been able to learn, no American publisher has ever participated in this Fair. In fact, it appears that only one North American publisher has ever held a stand at SILA—a Canadian press last year.

Certainly, French and Arabic dominated the floors of the Palais de la Culture; only one other stand beside Sabre's offered any selection of English books and even these were of limited quantity and scope, i.e. a handful of business guides.

At this time, no official attendance figures are available for the Fair, but, from personal

observation by Sabre and FOREM representatives, thousands attended daily. The Fair offers not only an opportunity for patrons to discover the vast wealth of publishing in the francophone and arabophone worlds, but also to participate in a number of seminars and special events. The two themes of the Fair naturally determined the nature of these events, and the startling contrast between them speaks to the unique character of the Algerian people.

The 11th Casablanca International Book Fair (Salon International du Livre et de L'Édition: SIEL) will take place from February 11-20, 2005, and promises much the same atmosphere. The 2005 celebration will mark the introduction of the Fair as an annual event, where previously it has been bi-annual. Representatives of the Fair expect some 700 publishers to attend from about 50 countries. The Casablanca Fair routinely serves as the site of the presentation of major literary and publishing awards, such as the Prix Grand Atlas presented by the French Embassy in Morocco.

II. Preparation of Book Donation for Algeria

As background, it should be mentioned that, as of 1998, Algeria was ranked as one of the less developed countries in Africa in terms of Internet connectivity and access, below many of the sub-Saharan countries.

Despite the fact that French dominates language-learning in Algeria, English has made significant progress in the last decade, particularly among youth and in no small part because of an interest in American culture and investment.

For the present, this has resulted in a linguistic situation unique among Sabre's programs, in that Sabre translates into French all of its correspondence with its current partner. At the same time, demand for English-language books in Algeria is on the up-swing. Having a tri-lingual culture (French, Arabic, and Berber), Algerians possess a remarkable facility for language acquisition, which they are increasingly directing toward English.

III. Book Shipment to Algeria

The Algeria shipment, consisting of 12,320 books with a fair market value of \$250,254, left the Sabre warehouse on July 23, 2004, and was received a month later. Prior to shipment, the books had been earmarked according to destination: pallets 1 and 7 were designated for FOREM libraries and the Book Fair, while the 8 other pallets were allocated to schools and educational institutions at FOREM's discretion.

The books ordered by FOREM consisted almost entirely of children's books, especially classroom texts, as well as medical and general reference books.

The shipment also included a broad selection of titles from the collection of books donated to Sabre Foundation by Smithsonian Press.

IV. Sabre Foundation Participation in 9th International Algiers Book Fair

Sabre began the work supported by the IIP grant in Algeria with the assistance of Sabre's in-country partner organization, FOREM (Fondation pour la Promotion de la Santé et le Développement de la Recherche), with whom Sabre participated in a donation of some 8,000 books in late 2002. The prospect of attempting direct distribution of donated books through the forum of an International Book Fair presented a number of challenges—from the question of housing for a Sabre representative for an extended duration to transportation to distribution strategy to translation of Sabre documents, all of which Sabre trusted FOREM to facilitate. Sabre's confidence in FOREM proved to be well-founded; in fact, FOREM exceeded Sabre's high expectations.

FOREM provided Sabre's representative at the Fair, Ray Huling, with a large and comfortable fifth-floor apartment in Garidi II, essentially a housing project on the outskirts of central Algiers. This located Mr. Huling squarely amidst the Algerian population, enabling him to meet and speak with precisely the 'Arab Street' so often spoken of in the U.S. media. The typical reaction from the people Mr. Huling met was one of genuine surprise to find an American quartered among them and enthusiasm for the work that Sabre had undertaken in Algeria.

It should be noted that Algeria is just beginning to emerge from a decade as one of the most terrorized countries in the world. Since the early nineties, over 120,000 people, Algerians and a great number of foreigners, especially Europeans, have died as a result of political violence throughout the country.

Unfortunately, Algeria has been largely ignored by both the international media and international

human rights and humanitarian aid organizations, in part due to the shadow that France continues to cast over its former colonial holding. For the most part, however, the violence has subsided; it has become relegated to Berber separatists in the East and terrorists-cum-bandits in the South. One should take into account as well that the 'Arab Street' term used above is not quite accurate, as Algeria boasts a very diverse population—and 'boasts' is meant in all its senses: paradoxically, Algeria's diversity is a source of both conflict and pride. Algerians will in all sincerity explain that the cause of the great intelligence they exhibit is the mix of different peoples in their large and centrally-located country—much like the U.S.A., they add.

Thus, Mr. Huling enjoyed perfect security throughout his stay and, indeed, profited from the opportunity to explore the city.

The apartment did have the disadvantage of lying some fifteen minutes by car from the Palais de la Culture, the site of the Book Fair. FOREM easily bridged this gap by providing a car and driver, Sid'Ali Boukheddar, at the disposition of Mr. Huling. As with the apartment, FOREM refused all offers of reimbursement for this service.



Photo: The View from Garidi II-Mr. Huling's Neighborhood in Algiers.

As concerns the FOREM staff, Mr. Huling found himself indebted to them for their hospitality, friendship, and assistance in book distribution. In charge of the FOREM stand was Madame Zahida Chihab, as representative of FOREM's press division. Madame Chihab was actually on vacation from her position at the Algerian Embassy in Lebanon, in order to manage the stand for the full duration of the Fair, on an entirely volunteer basis. This brand of commitment typifies FOREM's direct approach to humanitarian work; FOREM board members regularly take direct charge of projects.

Along with Madame Chihab, two FOREM employees held positions at the stand: Mademoiselle Hinda Bendaikha and Monsieur Said Choubane; both in their mid-twenties, both holding administrative positions at the FOREM offices in Algiers.



At the Fair itself, Sabre and FOREM shared a stand, which FOREM had previously registered and paid for. As Mr. Huling was the only person staffing the Sabre stand, FOREM provided the services of "les deux jeunes hommes" ("the two young men"), as they were affectionately known. These were two volunteers, Mustapha Fodili and Bachir Chaoui, aged twenty-two and twenty-eight, from FOREM's school for orphans of terrorism at Bentalha. Their aid proved invaluable on a daily basis, both because of the need to move books by hand from the Fair warehouse every morning and because of their attention to the occasional itchy fingers of the Fair patrons. In addition, they took great pleasure in assisting Mr. Huling with the improvement of his Arabic.

Photos: FOREM President Professor Khitati's Nephew's Help Sabre at the Fair.



Photo: Ray Huling, Sid'Ali Boukheddad, and Zahida Chihab Enjoy a Traditional Algerian Cous-Cous at the FOREM Stand. Note That They Are Eating in the Traditional Manner: from a Single Plate.

By way of consensus, Mr. Huling and the FOREM staff arrived at a means of distributing books donated by Sabre freely at the Fair. First, they made a selection of books from the containerized shipment that would both represent the larger donation designated for Algerian schools and educational institutions as well as draw the interest of students and teachers of English at the Fair. To this end, Sabre and FOREM had previously decided on titles from Sabre's inventory designated specifically for the Fair, including the following:

- Harvard Guide to Women's Health*
- Best American Essays 2001*
- Best American Short Stories 2002*
- Best American Travel Writing 2002*
- Portrait of a Lady*
- Literature of Africa*
- Annotated Huckleberry Finn*
- Discover America: The Smithsonian Book of the National Parks*
- Moby-Dick Norton Critical Edition*
- Legacies: Collecting America's History at the Smithsonian*
- Picture Tour of the National Museum (Smithsonian)*
- World Book Childcraft Dictionary*

In addition to these titles were a large number of children's story books, which patrons of the Fair greatly prized. The shipment included as well brochures from the American Association of University Press's Books for Understanding Project and literacy posters for children, courtesy of Patricia Schroeder of the Association

of American Publishers. These posters proved a big hit with Algerian children, though it was mostly their parents who recognized Donald Duck.

Sabre and FOREM also distributed a great many CD-ROMs, the popularity of which attested to the material progress Algeria has made in the past few years. Among the CD-ROMs distributed were the following:

Encyclopedia Britannica Ready-Reference
Webster's Dictionary
World Book Encyclopedia
The Way Things Work
ADAM: the Inside Story (Human Anatomy)
The Encyclopedia of Nature
Physician's Home Assistant
U.S. National Parks
Mathblaster

The method of book distribution consisted primarily of an informal interview, intended to determine the patron's knowledge of English and genuine interest in the books. Once an interest in the Sabre display had been expressed, Mr. Huling would begin to explain in French that the books were, in fact, not for sale, but represented a larger donation being made by Sabre, in cooperation with FOREM, to Algerian schools, libraries, and educational institutions. Mr. Huling would then proceed to enquire about the patron's interest, occupation, education in English, background, and so on. Once it had been established that the patron was a student, a teacher, a professor, a journalist, or a representative of an educational institution, Mr. Huling would then simply offer this person the book (or books) in question. By this means, Sabre and FOREM (who took over distribution after Mr. Huling's departure for Morocco) both avoided a great crowd and managed to distribute some 1,500 new books and CD-ROMs in English.



Photo:

English Teachers from an Algiers Elementary School Make a Selection of Sabre Books for Their Classrooms.

The Algerian response to this effort proved uniformly positive—and immediately so. The Sabre home office began to receive e-mails of gratitude from Algeria just two days after the Fair's commencement. Algerian patrons understood Sabre's presence at the Fair as benefiting not just themselves, but all of Algeria. They considered Sabre's work an act of generosity toward their country as a whole.

In the same respect, FOREM found great benefit in cooperating with Sabre. The first purpose of FOREM's stand was to offer a selection of its publications, which covered an extraordinarily broad range of topics, from Professor Khiati's newest book *Les enfants avant tout* (Children Before All) to some of his earlier, more specialized texts on child asthma to *Oiseaux d'Algerie* (Birds of Algeria). The latter title indicates one of the

very latest movements in Algeria, that of environmental studies and eco-tourism. Encompassing land three times the size of Texas, much of it gorgeously Saharan, Algeria's struggle to overcome its security issues has as one of its primary goals the opening of one of the few landscapes in the world that can rival the American SouthWest for sheer, raw beauty—a natural resource that needs no development, only careful and sustainable management.

La FOREM has only begun to undertake projects of this aspect, but they have done so in the same clear, pragmatic way that they proceed with their efforts in support of scientific research and solidarity. This common-sense approach evinces itself even in the manner in which FOREM offered its books. In contrast with nearly all of the large publishers in attendance at the Fair, FOREM sold its books cheap. All of their titles went for a price between 150 and 350 Dinars (about two to three Dollars). Across the way from Sabre and FOREM, Editions Maxi-Livres, a large and well-known French press, offered a large, hard-bound story-book edition of the Fables of La Fontaine for 1300 Dinars, almost twenty Dollars. In a word, nearly all the other stands sold (or, really, offered for sale, but didn't often sell) books at what amounted to American prices.

As it turned out, Sabre books proved a draw that led to a greater interest in the FOREM stand. Mr. Huling made it a point to invite those patrons who had benefited from Sabre's program to visit the adjacent stand held by FOREM, without whom Sabre's presence would not have been possible. The reverse situation occurred often enough, as patrons of the FOREM stand took a step over to visit Sabre, too.

Regarding the dissemination of its brochures, Sabre took into account the preponderance of French speakers at the Fair. Sabre made copies of its Summer 2004 Update available, but supplemented them with a one-page summary of Sabre's work in Algeria translated into French by Mr. Huling with the assistance of FOREM staff.



French language skills also showed their value by way of the number of interviews Mr. Huling gave to a variety of French and Algerian newspapers—some half-dozen, all told. Among the first to be published was an article in *Jeune Afrique*, a well-known, French-language magazine in North Africa. Here follows the relevant paragraph:

Among the publishing houses of the Arab-Muslim world, one should note the first participation [in the Fair] of Iran and Oman, as well as the return of Iraqi books. Finally, the United States was represented by the non-governmental organization Sabre Foundation, which specializes in book donations throughout the world. "It's our first experiment, undertaken with the help of the Algerian organization FOREM," explained Raymond Huling, representative of the program. The purpose of our participation is to distribute new books donated directly by American publishers. Patrons have only to present a student identity card in order to receive books.

In addition to those from Algerian journalists, Sabre enjoyed a visit from the Political Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy, Linda Cowher. Ms. Cowher expressed her admiration and enthusiasm for Sabre's program, and both she and Khalid Omar Gueffaz, Information/Media Assistant in the Public Affairs Section, proved very supportive, not only of Sabre's presence at the Fair, but also of the prospect of continued and expanded Sabre programs in Algeria.

Photo: Ray Huling, Linda Cowher, PAO at U.S. Embassy, Algiers, and Madame Chihab at the Fair

Since Mr. Huling's return to the U.S., Sabre has received a number of letters and e-mails of thanks for the books distributed at the Fair and for Sabre's work in Algeria country-wide. In addition to these notes, Sabre continues to receive requests, from both Algerians and Moroccans, for the donation of new books in English. One letter complained that, in Algeria, there are great impediments to all attempts to obtain English-language books, such as: "No ordering; No convertibility of local currency; No vouchers at the post offices; No sale agencies."

Sabre distributed a great number of books at the 9th International Book Fair in Algiers and furthered the American commitment to improving education world-wide; Sabre's partner, la FOREM, continues to distribute Sabre books to schools, libraries, and educational institutions throughout Algeria; but it's clear that we have only begun to meet the needs (and the demands) for English-language educational materials in North Africa. Both Sabre and FOREM agree that a much broader program of donations and of exchanges must be put into place, in order to stimulate the progress of education in general and English-language instruction in particular.

V. Sabre Visit to Morocco

Sabre held a series of meetings in Morocco in order to establish precisely the same program there as had previously been put into place in Algeria. That is: a program of book donation consisting of two 20' containers of new books and educational materials and Sabre's direct participation in the distribution of books at the International Book Fair in Casablanca.

To this end, Mr. Huling first visited the campus of the American School in Marrakesh (ASM). Sabre had previously been in contact with the ASM's Head Librarian, Malin Halladay, as well as its Business Director Driss Drissi. In addition, Sabre Secretary Charles Getchell had previously spoken on the telephone with Joe McPhillips, Headmaster

of the American School in Tangier, of which AMS is a subsidiary. An English-language school with an American-style curriculum, the new, \$2 million AMS facility lies 12 kilometers from Marrakesh center, facing the High Atlas mountains. The school serves some 300 students, of whom 90% are Moroccan, from levels Pre-Kindergarten to 9th grade, with plans to expand to 12th grade over the next few years. At present, AMS must purchase its classroom texts directly from publishers, and the library holds only 2,000 volumes—just 10% of its total capacity. Sabre would be able to meet almost all of AMS's textbook needs, as well as provide a substantial contribution to its library collection.



Photo left: Library of the American School in Marrakesh. The Empty Shelves Speak Volumes.
Photo right - Façade of AMS.

AMS would like to partner directly with Sabre for a program of book donation outside of Sabre's current State Department grant, possibly in tandem with its parent school in Tangier. Sabre books and educational materials would benefit not only the American Schools but also local schools in Marrakesh and Tangier, as the American Schools regularly donate books in their areas.

Mr. Huling next traveled from Marrakesh to Rabat, in order to meet with one of Sabre's prospective partner organizations in Morocco, AMIDEAST. Founded in 1951, AMIDEAST (America-Mideast Educational and Training Services, Inc.) is a private, nonprofit organization that provides English language skills training, educational advising and testing services to hundreds of thousands of students and professionals in the Middle East and North Africa, supports numerous institutional development projects in the region, and administers academic exchange programs. AMIDEAST is headquartered in Washington, DC with a network of field offices in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, West Bank/Gaza, and Yemen.

Sabre and AMIDEAST previously partnered together in 2001 on a program of book donation to Peace Corps Morocco. This shipment consisted of 9,527 books with a fair market value of \$219,000. Sabre had contacted AMIDEAST's new Country Director, Joe Phillips, and, at the time, acting director Stephen Hanchey (currently Director of English Language Programs), both of whom expressed interest in renewing AMIDEAST's partnership with Sabre in Morocco.

On September 16th, Mr Huling met with both Mr. Hanchey and Ken Norris, English Language Program Director. While AMIDEAST would benefit directly from Sabre books, Mr. Hanchey expressed concern over the costs to AMIDEAST of partnership in a book donation program with regard to clearing customs, warehousing, and distributing books, which are all key aspects of the role of partner with Sabre.

With a view to assisting AMIDEAST in meeting these costs, as well as to continue Sabre's cooperation with the U.S. Embassy in Morocco (Sabre had already begun to supply the Embassy with books from Smithsonian Press for the American Corners Program, in consultation with Terry White, PAO), Mr. Huling met with Dominique Theys BenBrahim, Cultural Affairs Specialist of the Public Affairs Section of the U.S. Embassy. Also in attendance at this meeting were Malika El Boury Baiz, IRC Director, and, briefly, John Scacco, Regional English Language Officer.

All present were very enthusiastic about Sabre's program and the partnership between Sabre and AMIDEAST. Malika Baiz offered to contact a number of potential recipients and assured Mr. Huling that English-language books would be in very high demand.

Mr. Huling also discussed potential customs difficulties with Embassy staff. Despite the fact that the container cannot be sent to AMIDEAST via Diplomatic Pouch, it was made clear that customs should not present a problem: both donated books and donated CD-Roms that serve an educational purpose benefit from duty exceptions.

Both Madame BenBrahim and Madame Baiz thought it important that Mr. Huling visit the library of La Fondation Orient-Occident in Rabat as well as Dar America in Casablanca. Arrangements for these two meetings were made immediately.

The Orient-Occident Foundation has established several reading libraries throughout Morocco—in Oujda, Larache, Safi, Taza, and Casablanca, as well as Rabat, with three more in preparation – Essaouria, Chefchaouen, and Kasir El Kebir. Each library serves as an information resource center, providing internet and database access, as well as a cultural center, providing youth-oriented workshops. Mr. Huling visited the Rabat facility, located on the Avenue des F.A.R. in a poorer section of the city. At the Foundation, Mr.

Huling spoke with Director Racha Loutfi, who expressed great interest in participating in the book program. The patrons of the Rabat library consist mainly of young students, ranging in age from 16-22 years old. Director Loutfi said that the Foundation's network of libraries could accommodate a donation of some 6,000 English-language books and would like to participate directly in the selection of titles.



Photo:

Foundation Orient-Occident's Building was Designed to Represent a Bridge from One Side of the Mediterranean to the Other. It is the Newest and Most Modern Building on the Avenue des F.A.R.

The following day, Mr. Huling took the train to Casablanca, in order to meet with Tanya Anderson, Director, and Amina Jaouad, IRC Director, of Dar America (America House), an English-language lending library (perhaps the only one in Morocco) and cultural center, established under the auspices of the U.S. Embassy. The Dar America Information Resource Center in Casablanca offers a comprehensive collection of 2,000 books about the United States including books about American history, geography, literature, politics, women studies, culture, English teaching, art and current issues. It also offers periodicals and materials on CD-ROM, as well as access to on-line databases such as Lexis-Nexis. As part of their outreach program, Dar America distributes books, brochures, information packets, articles, and other products to selected recipients. Part of this program takes place at book fairs throughout Morocco, including the Casablanca International Book Fair.

In addition, AMIDEAST has an office in their building and provides a number of services and programs there.

Both Ms. Anderson and Ms. Jaouad expressed an interest in participating in the selection and distribution of donated, English-language books, as well as cooperative participation with Sabre in the Casablanca book fair next February.

Shortly after returning from Casablanca, Mr. Huling met with Rosamaria Durand, Director of the UNESCO regional office. Also in attendance were Saida Abouid and Aouali Mouagni, Director of Program Coordination. UNESCO also expressed an interest in a book donation program and suggested that the

U.S. Embassy may be able to help with warehousing donated books, as well as with customs. UNESCO very much would have liked for Mr. Huling to meet with the Ministry of Youth and Sport, as a book program could greatly benefit their Youth Reading Centers, but he had to leave for the States before such a meeting could take place.

Finally, Mr. Huling met with Mark Parkison, now of USAID, but formerly Director of AMIDEAST (in fact, Mr. Parkison headed up AMIDEAST at the time of Sabre's 2001 donation of books to Peace Corps Morocco). Mr. Parkison proved an invaluable resource, as he provided the name of a Moroccan national at AMIDEAST who has experience dealing with customs (he expedited the 2001 shipment on behalf of Peace Corps), as well as the names of AMIDEAST staff in Washington, D.C., whom, he suggested, it would be worthwhile for Sabre to contact with a view to applying in tandem with AMIDEAST for supplementary grants for programs of book donation.

VI. Future Sabre Foundation Participation in Book Fairs

Sabre Foundation rates its experience at the 9th International Algiers Book Fair as an unqualified success and, subject to continued funding, plans to continue with this manner of direct distribution to needy individuals in the developing world. Several improvements could be made in this process, in order to increase the effectiveness and impact of Sabre's participation in Book Fairs.

First, Sabre's in-country partner organization should have full control over the donated books well in advance of their distribution at the Fairs. As it happened in Algiers, the vagaries and occasional obstinacy of customs officials made it necessary for Mr. Huling and the two young men of FOREM to remove by hand every morning a small quantity of books from the warehouse to the Palais de la Culture (a quarter of a mile uphill), and even these small allowances came about only after a laborious daily process of negotiating with customs officers and warehouse workers. The solution to this problem is merely to ship the books early to the partner organization. In the present case, the long delay in the awarding of the Department of State grant to Sabre held back the shipment of books to FOREM and therefore contributed significantly to the eventual difficulties experienced by both FOREM and Sabre in seeing the books delivered to the Fair on time.

Second, it would greatly benefit the distribution process at Book Fairs to have at the very least two—possibly three—Sabre staff members available for duty at the stand. This would ensure, not only that Sabre can more easily deal

with the number of patrons who visit the stand, but that other, incidental tasks don't distract from the main purpose of book distribution. A fuller staff would also relieve the partner organization of some responsibility over Sabre's booth. In Algiers, it fell to Mr. Huling alone to conduct interviews with the press, attend to the printing of brochures and display materials, make travel arrangements, deal with customs difficulties, record the event with a digital camera, as well as oversee the management of the stand and book distribution. Had it not been for FOREM's willingness to donate their staff to assist Sabre, Mr. Huling would have been hard pressed indeed.

Third, it became clear that, even in a relatively developed (if relatively unstable) country such as Algeria, local Internet access does not meet the needs of an American office. Mr. Huling had only intermittent e-mail communication with the Sabre office and even that came at a significant investment in time, requiring a trip into Algiers and a search for a viable Internet Café. Again, FOREM obviated this problem by providing Mr. Huling with a cell phone for the duration of his stay, a remarkable instance of foresight. For the future, Sabre should anticipate limited Internet access for the duration of stays abroad.

Last, the importance of linguistic preparation for an event of this kind cannot be underestimated. In-country translation of documents proved a time-consuming affair and should be accomplished before departure. Likewise, the courtesy of speaking or attempting to speak the language (or, in Algeria's case, *languages*) of the host

country is not lost on the patrons of a stand offering English-language books. Even Mr. Huling's rudimentary Arabic received a warm response from Algerians at the Fair. Communicating in the native tongue signals a respect that is both much appreciated and much deserved; it is an especially important gesture for Americans, from whom such an effort is rarely expected.
