

Conference Report

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On June 13, 2001 I arrived in San Francisco to attend the 125th American Library Association Annual Conference. I was the only Lebanese librarian and the only woman librarian from the Arab countries.

This year the conference attracted 23,000 American librarians and 200 "international" librarians from all over the world. The exhibition that accompanied the conference included 4500 publishers, book dealers, database vendors and specialized information networks promoters.

In addition to the professional sessions and the exhibition, around two hundred poster sessions were held over a period of three days. My participation consisted of giving a poster session on the special collection kept at the Lebanese American University Library (Beirut) that serves the educational, informational and research needs of the Institute for Women Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW). This special collection does not only serve the Institute and local researchers, but also students as well and researchers abroad who can make use of our holdings through our Document Delivery Services.

The poster session was titled "Lebanese American University Library Collection: Media on Arab Women". The promotional material needed was shipped beforehand and was prepared basically by the IWSAW staffs with the help of some librarians.

My poster session included displayed book covers strictly on Arab women or by Arab women, promotional materials on some of IWSAW's activities, publications by IWSAW, fliers and pamphlets. A special



section had also photos and publications on pioneer Lebanese and Arab Women who made a difference in our lives.

I had a chance to meet librarians, publishers, professors of women's studies and feminist activists. The queries posed by a variety of visitors were noteworthy. Some researchers in women's studies from Singapore and the US had numerous questions about the status of Arab women and the Institutes' activities. Interest in books on women and the law in Arab countries was frequently expressed and concern by many participants was voiced especially about the plight of women in Islamic countries and particularly women in Afghanistan.

I answered questions on Lebanon and the turmoil in the Middle East and drew attention to works of fiction by Lebanese women who experienced the war in Lebanon. Many people expressed their wish to have copies of al-Raida, a journal that normally deals with sensitive issues related to the Arab/Islamic world.