

Children's Book Carnival and Play

A Book is a Window into the World!

Choose a book you like and begin to read. The more books you read the more you learn about the world in which you grow and which you will change and improve. It must be a world of friendship and peace, a world of beautiful books and happy children. Choose your books wisely, books you will want to read again. (Wojciech Zukrowski, uncle from Poland who writes books for children, IBBY)

May 11-20, Beirut University College

For ten days the campus of Beirut University College swarmed with little people. Approximately 7,000 children, from 20 local schools, ages 6 to 14, came in their school buses. The event was a selected book Exhibition and a play entitled "The Mountain of Elves".

The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World, (IWSAW), and the Lebanese chapter of the International Board on Books for Young Children, (LIBBY), organized the Carnival and the play within the context of their annual activities for promoting reading for children. The books were selected according to the standards of The International Board on Books for Young Children, (IBBY)(1), which take into account educational, psychological, moral, ethical, and the entertainment qualities of children's reading material. The Arab Cultural Club supported the activity and donated the stands on which the books were displayed. Ten local publishers(2) exhibited their children's selection and sold the books at a discount of retail prices.



School teachers, members of LIBBY, the staff of IWSAW, and the personnel of the respective publishing houses made sure that the children had enough time, space, guidance and assistance in selecting their books. Books were displayed according to age brackets (3-5, 5-7, 7-9, 9-12, 12-14 years old). It was noted that almost every child left with two new books they added to their library.

Old and new books in the Lebanese market and from overseas were selected and introduced in the Exhibition. For months prior to the Exhibition, members of LIBBY selected the books, by reading them, evaluating them and categorizing them according to ages. LIBBY is also planning to follow up by publishing a

1992 updated list of the selected books. This list may be used by parents, teachers and schools to direct the reading of the children and to have an educated and credible choice of the books in the market.

(1) IBBY, The International Board of Books for Young Children operates under the umbrella of the UNESCO

(2) Book stands included publication of the following Publishing Houses: Levant Distributors, Nawfal Group, Librairie Samir, Librairie Du Liban, Books and Pens, Dar al-Kitab al-Lubnani, Dar al-Shourouk, Tala, Nadim Tarazi Library, al-Ahlia li-nashr in addition to the publications of The Institute for Women's Studies in the Arab World (IWSAW).



The play, "The mountain of Elves", complimented what a child would read in a book. It included dance and play. It told the story of a shoemaker's family who was being blackmailed by an evil woman, while the shoemaker himself was away in the service. They were in debt to the evil woman who kept threatening to foreclose the shop. The fairy from the mountain of elves came to the help of the the shoemaker's wife and daughter, so did the people of the village. In the end the shoemaker was reunited with his family, the shop was saved, and an atmosphere of happiness, peace and love prevailed. Hence, the play brought forth ethical and moral concepts such as peace,

helping the to the poor, cooperation and team work among the inhabitants of the village, fairies portrayed as friendly, etc . . .

The children were mesmerized by Crombo and Finella, the friendly fairies on mission to do something good for humans. The play was directed by Dr. Shakib Khoury, a reputed producer and production professor at Beirut University College; and dance and choreography by the famous ballet teacher Mrs. Georgette Gebara.

One is short of words to describe the innocent reaction and behavior of

young children. The innocence and excitement is breathtaking. Their little remarks and fairy observations leave you speechless. In the play they watched, eager and anxious to join the friendly fairies. In The Exhibit they were impatient yet carefully scrutinizing the books on display. A child would hold a book in his hand and run to his class teacher to get advice and approval to purchase the book.

Every year, LIBBY and IWSAW organize a reading activity for children, in continuous emphasis on the importance reading the selection of sound reading material •

R.A.H.