



Remarks at the 2nd AGM by Professor Yosef Salmon

The National Library Readers Association became a registered amuta about two years ago. Sadly, two of the Association's founding members are deceased: Dr. Avraham Greenbaum and Professor Jonathan Frankel. As an amuta, the Association is now a registered legal entity. Its members include all those interested in the future and the present functioning of the National Library. The previous board was chosen at the First Annual General Meeting, held in August 2008, and had seven members, including academics and other users of the library, such as translators. The Association mailing list has over 300 members.

The board of the Association was involved in the process of the passage of the National Library Law--2007 which endowed the library with independent status, and legislated its separation from the Hebrew University. Association board members participated in the sessions of the Knesset Education Committee and presented the readers' perspective. At present, a directorate headed by Mr. David Blumberg administers the library. Yad HaNadiv is leading the way in the planning of the new National Library. Yad HaNadiv has allocated \$100 million dollars to the building of the new library, on condition that the government of Israel provide matching funds. The planning process is moving apace. A site has yet to be chosen: there are two options--Kiryat Haleum or Givat Ram. The library is also undergoing administrative reorganization, but that is not my topic today.

Today I would like to note some of our successes and perhaps some of our failures. First of all, the library has undergone a revival. When the university library





moved to Mt. Scopus, along with many books, this depleted the collections and the ranks of the users. As someone who has known the library since its founding, I was saddened by this and even found myself humming verses from Lamentations.

However, in recent years, the library has returned to its former glory: the Jewish and Oriental Reading Rooms are full of readers most hours of the day. I cannot explain this change; perhaps it is in some part influenced by Association activity. The presence of amuta board members in the various reading rooms provides the library administration with ongoing feedback on the current situation. We bring any problems that we see to the attention of the administration, from the wireless internet to the condition of the bathrooms. I must note the receptivity of the administration, especially of director Shmuel Har-Noy to our comments and requests. Our goal is to benefit the library and the readers by developing a positive approach and cooperation with the administration.

Many improvements at the library over the past two years can be attributed to our intervention. They range from small things such as extra sockets for laptop computers, work areas in the lobby and Ardon lobby where people can talk or work together, to our Acquisitions Committee, which has had success in bringing lacunae in the collection to the library's attention. It also acquired a list of 10,000 missing books, many of which have now been located.

An important achievement has been the agreement with the administration that our representative can have observer status at meetings of the directorate. It has been





agreed that Dr. Aviad Hacoen, an Association board member, will represent us at these sessions.

We are in contact via e-mail with our amuta membership and other interested parties and send updates on our activity and library news.

Recently, we were approached with respect to a bequest to the library in a will. The administration has generously agreed that all donations received through our association will be earmarked for book acquisitions. Our success in locating donors will of course increase our influence at the library.

The recent extension of the library hours is also partly due to our efforts: at present, the library will be open from 9-20 four days a week.

But one of our failures was that we did not succeed in preventing the closing of the Periodicals Reading Room. Although we have received promises that there will be displays in the reading rooms, in the meantime this important service to readers has been impaired and the alternates are not yet functioning.

We would be delighted to add any individuals from Israel and abroad to our amuta or to our mailing list. We welcome your initiatives and ask that you volunteer of your time to forward our goals. We also request that you turn to possible donors in your circles--this means of commemoration is also an important service to the community.

