

The National Library of Lebanon: History, Function, Perspectives

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Structure

- History of the National Library of Lebanon
- Function of the National Library of Lebanon
 - What is a National Library?
- Current Situation and Future Perspectives

The National Library of Lebanon



The foundation of a library

The founding period

- Philippe de Tarrazi founded during the French Mandate with his private collection the *Grand Bibliothèque de Beyrouth* 1921
- Declaration as *Bibliothèque nationale du Liban* 1921 with the function to collect, to preserve and to present the national heritage of Lebanon

Philippe de Tarrazi (1865-1956)



The Lebanese National Library until the Civil War (1975-1990)

The Lebanese National Library was brought under the authority of the ministry of education 1937 until the outbreak of the Civil War



- The National Library was until 1975 the only library in Lebanon that was accessible to the public

Place de l'étoile
The former Ministry of Education and Today's Parliament



The Revival of the National Library

- 1979 closure of the National Library
- Holdings were hosted in different parts of the city
- 1993 the National Library was brought under the authority of the Ministry of Culture and Higher Education
- 2003 Projet de Rehabilitation de la Bibliothèque nationale by funding of the European Union and the State of Qatar

Renovation of the Sanayeh Complex as the new building of the National Library until 2006

- Intermezzo 2006-2018 with a short opening



The short opening of the National Library 2019

The Lebanese National Library Won't Let You Read After 1:30 PM



on Aug 29, 2019
By Tala Ramadan

TRENDING

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Good news: After being closed off to the public for 39 years, the Lebanese National Library is officially reopening during the first week of September.

<https://www.beirut.com/l/58360>

Relapse in 2019



Official
Reopening on
February 10,
2022

Lebanon's National Library reopens after port blast repairs

L'Orient Today / By Richard SALAME, 10 February 2022 15:20



Prime Minister Najib Mikati browses through books during the reopening ceremony of the National Library in Beirut, February 10, 2022, upon completion of restoration work in the aftermath of the summer 2020 port explosion. (AFP / Anwar Amro)

<https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1290371/lebanons-national-library-reopens-after-port-blast-repairs.html>

What is a national library?

- First mentioning of the term „National Library“ 1792 in relation to the Bibliothèque nationale de France
- National Libraries should have an international standard according to the UNESCO:
 - Collection of the national literature
 - National Bibliography
 - Preservation of the national heritage
- According to IFLA:
- „guardians of a country’s history. They collect, preserve, and make available a country’s history to all of its citizens, and open a window on that country to people all over the world.”
- <https://www.ifla.org/de/units/national-libraries/>

What is a national library?

Attempts of a definition I

„National library: an institution, primarily funded (directly or indirectly) by the state, which is responsible for collecting, bibliographically recording, preserving and making available the documentary heritage (primarily published materials of all types) emanating from or relating to its country; and which furthers the effective and efficient functioning of the provision of infrastructure, the coordination of activities in the country’s library and information system, international liaison, and the exercise of leadership. These responsibilities are formally recognized, usually in law.”

Lor, Peter Johan: *Guidelines for Legislation for National Library Services*, p. 7, URL: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000109568>

What is a national library?

Attempts of a definition II

„National libraries capture and preserve the memory of nations, all the while maintaining a position in the present and the future. Their mission include the preservation of the national memory and culture of a nation. They have an obligation to educate. They foster national development and publish the cultural heritage. National libraries serve as the recognized repository of a nation’s publications. They strive to preserve knowledge and experiences in conventional and digital formats.“

Mansfield, Jerry W.: „National Libraries as Centers of Innovation. An IFLA Journal 40th Anniversary Tribute“, in: *International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions* 40/3 (2014), 143-144, here: 143a.

National libraries as models for innovation and change

National libraries with this wide range of tasks have a "historical/cultural/educational mandate" and "must be at the leading edge of change" insofar as they serve as "models for innovation and change"

Mansfield, Jerry W.: „National Libraries as Centers of Innovation“, 143a.

Tasks and Functions of the Lebanese National Library

The Law No. 36

- Law No. 36 regulated the tasks of the national library:
- Collection, archiving and presentation of the country's intellectual achievements.
- Support for the development of public libraries
- Stock development
- Promotion of excellence at the national level
- Legal deposit

Perspectives

- The future National Library

The Lebanese National Library

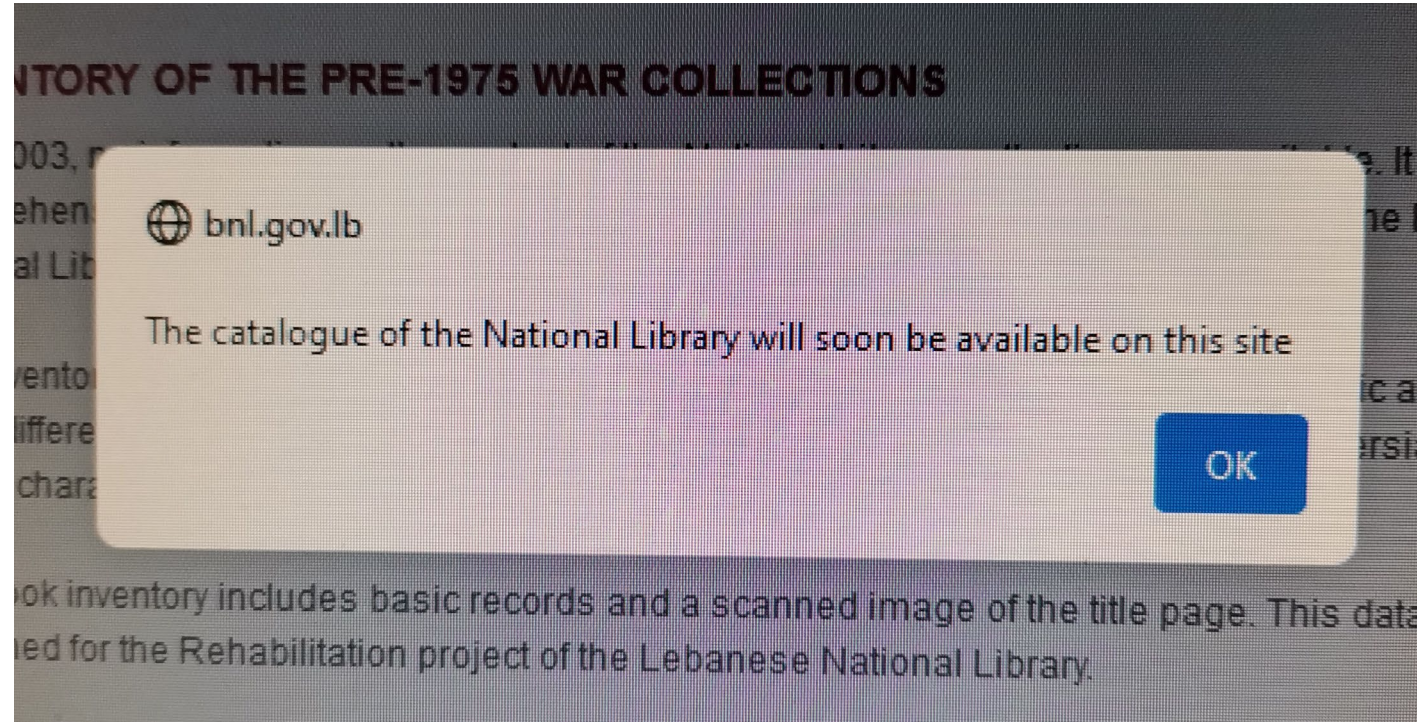
Welcome to the official website of the future Lebanese National Library, which is presently in a « revival » process. Its premises are currently in the Free Zone of the Port of Beirut.

The sections that are enabled on this site relate the history of the institution and present the current state of the Library, as well as the ongoing works carried out by a team especially hired for that purpose by the Revival Project of the LNL.

The non-activated sections on the site are linked to the future institution's departments and services that will be operational with the official opening of the Library in Sanayeh.

<http://bnl.gov.lb/English/index.html>

Library Holdings and Catalog



- Around 120.000 (or 300.000) physical volumes in different languages among them Arabic, French, English and Syriac
- Periodicals also in Ottoman, Urdu, Persian and Korean
- Catalogued with LOCSH

The National Library as a symbol for culture and social cohesion

From antiquity to the present



The National Library as a „parlament culturel“ (Jean-Pierre Fattal)



Çok teşekkürler

شكراً جزيلاً