

In Honour of Memory

Introducing the Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression's Project dedicated to the New Library of Alexandria

By Mette Newth, project leader

0. Introduction

Allow me to first express my pleasure at being here. The original idea of the Bibliotheca Alexandrina database project was conceived by the Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression in Spring of 1997, and strongly supported by Mr. Frode Bakken, then Chairman of The Norwegian Library Association. Right from the start we hoped for co-operation with IFLA and the then emerging IFLA/FAIFE Office. All the more pleasurable to be here today, knowing that IFLA through the IFLA/FAIFE Office will be a close partner in the future development of this unique and ambitious project. A project aiming to collect and make electronically available bibliographic data on all books and newspapers censored world wide through the ages, as well as literature published on freedom of expression and censorship.

Libraries remain the true memory of humanity. Our project is created in honour of the vast number of men and women whose writings for various reasons were censored through human history, - many of their books now lost forever – their ideas and thoughts in no way available to the public. Thus we regard the database also as a monument to the fundamental right of free access to information.

Let me briefly introduce the Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression: founded in 1995 by 15 major Norwegian organisations within the media field as an independent centre of documentation and information. NFFE still remains a fairly unique constellation of organisations, representing as it does authors and translators, booksellers, libraries and publishers, journalists and editors as well as HR organisations such as P.E.N and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee. NFFE, entirely funded by the founding organisations, is committed to defend freedom of expression worldwide. International co-operation and electronic networking are important strategies for the defence and enhancement of free expression, free debate and free access to information. NFFE became a member of IFEX already in 1995, NFFE still being the only Nordic member of this fast growing international network of freedom of expression organisations. Needless to say, NFFE strongly supported the membership of IFLA/FAIFE in IFEX this year.

On behalf of the member organisations, NFFE established in 1996 the *IFEX Internet Alert Service* - a database on documentation of current freedom of expression violations. The main objective of this service is to provide the general public with free access to information on freedom of expression issues, thus contributing to increase public awareness, knowledge and understanding. (www.ifex.org)

As for myself, I am an author and translator by profession, I served as the first administrator of NFFE from 1995 - 98 and as the convenor of IFEX in 1998 then went on to concentrate on the project in hand. Currently I am the principal of the Oslo National College of Arts.

Within the time generously allotted to this session, I wish to both present to you the aims and

background, main principles, our modus operandi and challenges, and not least the future challenges, leaving ample time for your questions and comments. When I have chosen to make my project presentation according to the web site presentation of the database, it is simply because the database - still being updated with entries for 2000 - is less than attractive in print outs.

The *Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression* project, is created in honour of the new Bibliotheca Alexandria, once the outstanding library of the ancient world. Representing a model bibliographical database on censorship and freedom of expression throughout history as well as a model of international collaboration across professional borders, the project commemorates the memory of all victims of censorship – past and present. In the true spirit of Article 19 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the project is freely available to users worldwide.

The project consists of: the "*Bibliotheca Alexandrina*" international database, the web-site "*Beacon for Freedom of Expression*" and the publication "*Essays on Freedom of Expression*"

The "*Bibliotheca Alexandrina*" international database, presently containing more than 55000 bibliographical entries concerning publications on freedom of expression and censorship issues, and censored books and newspapers through the ages, will be presented to the new library of Alexandria by the Norwegian Minister of Culture early in 2001. The date of the opening still not fixed by Egyptian authorities.

The database is produced by Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression in collaboration with Faculty of Journalism, Library and Information Science at the Oslo College.

The web-site "*Beacon for Freedom of Expression*", dedicated to make this unique source of knowledge easily accessible world wide, is produced by Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression and RAVN/Webveverier A/S. The Beacon for Freedom of Expression web site shall present news, updates and teasers such as:

- Earliest known censored book
- Top of the list: most censored books through the ages
- Top of the list: most censored book in the last decade
- Top of the list: censoring countries in the last decade
- Censorship: state of the art in 2000

The publication "*Essays on Freedom of Expression*" is produced by Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression in co-operation with the Norwegian publisher J.W. Cappelen Forlag, to be launched in the Autumn of 2000. The book, published simultaneously in English and Norwegian, is an integrated part of the Norwegian gift to the Library of Alexandria as well as an independent publication. The book contains both original Norwegian contributions and essays from *Index on Censorship* "Word power" (no. 2/99), produced by *Index on Censorship*, one of our partners in the Bibliotheca Alexandrina database project, in celebration of the new library of Alexandria, originally scheduled to open in the Autumn of 1999.

The full text of "*Essays on Freedom of Expression*" will be available on the dedicated web-site, thus contributing to our ambition of presenting the "*Bibliotheca Alexandrina*" database and "*Beacon for Freedom of Expression*" web-site as a gift to the world community.

In respect of the indisputable copyright of all authors, Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression wishes to remind users that copyright is indispensable to freedom of expression and free access to information, as copyright protects the integrity of the author's work, and provides the basis for remuneration.

Honouring Bibliotheca Alexandria, the first "public" library of the world

The new library of Alexandria will be inaugurated almost 2300 years after Bibliotheca Alexandrina, the world's first "public" library, was built on the African continent. The new Bibliotheca Alexandrina, a pride to Egypt and the world, is regarded as the most exciting library to emerge in our times. Designed by the Norwegian architects Snøhetta, the revival of the Library is a joint project by the Egyptian Government and UNESCO, with a marked involvement on the part of the Norwegian Government. The revival of Bibliotheca Alexandrina is in itself an event of historic magnitude. Of no less symbolic significance is the fact that Bibliotheca Alexandrina opens at the very beginning of this millennium.

In ancient times, Bibliotheca Alexandrina represented a unique world forum of human knowledge, thoughts and ideas. The revival is awaited with great anticipation, not least underscored by UNESCO's *International Commission for the Revival of the Ancient Library of Alexandria* in their Aswan declaration:

"The Bibliotheca Alexandrina will stand as a testimony to a decisive moment in the history of human thought - the attempt to constitute a summum of knowledge, to assemble the writings of the peoples.

It will bear witness to an original undertaking that, in embracing the totality and diversity of human experience, became the matrix for a new spirit of critical inquiry, for a heightened perception of knowledge as a tool and the quest for knowledge as a collaborative process."

The Aswan declaration on the revival of the library of Alexandria (1990)

Entering a new millennium with the aims of fostering a spirit of openness, exploring the field of knowledge and making knowledge accessible, the new Bibliotheca Alexandrina will carry on the proud traditions of this once so important library, thus also representing *the* world library for human rights and humanism.

The database "*Bibliotheca Alexandrina*" will represent the most comprehensive collection of bibliographical information on censorship and freedom of expression. In accordance with the aims of the Aswan declaration, NFFE wishes to contribute to an open dialogue between the world's cultures on the important and controversial Article 19 of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights: the universal right to freedom of expression.

Honouring the memory of all victims of censorship – past and present

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom of opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

Article 19, 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights

When the members of the newly formed United Nations signed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, it was in honour of the memory of millions of people murdered in Nazi Germany, thus pledging not to forget and never to let it happen again. But history continues to repeat itself, even in this age of information-abundance, flowing ever more rapidly through electronic superhighways. Influencing and controlling public opinion through the media still represent a vital strategy in modern warfare, as it did in the Thirty Years' War (1618-48) and in all the wars of the 20th Century. However, armed conflicts and wars are most certainly not the only causes of severe censorship.

Authors and journalists, editors and publishers are often the very first victims of censorship. It is a bitter irony that in 1998, the year of international celebrations of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, independent human rights and freedom of expression organisations reported that 118 journalists were imprisoned in 25 countries, while 24 journalists were murdered. Numerous newspapers, publishers and broadcasters were subject to banning,

closure or violent attacks such as bombings. Since then, attacks on press freedom have not subsided. The recent gagging of the remaining liberal press in Iran bears witness to this fact.

It is in honour of the countless victims of censorship, Norwegian Forum for Freedom of Expression has undertaken the ambitious task of collecting data on the books and newspapers of free thinking men and women that were banned through history.

Recognising that knowledge of the past is essential to understanding the present, our ambition has been to see the conditions for freedom of expression today in a broader context and time perspective: that of the world history of censorship. Thus contributing to the awareness that freedom of expression, free access to information and a free debate represents the best defence any people have against suppression.

Knowledge of the past is essential; not only to establish a comprehensive and balanced view of censorship throughout the world, but also to elucidate that censorship appears in very different societies, crossing all cultural borders. NFFE regards it as important to correct the erroneous conception, frequently harboured in Western societies, that Western countries always have been impeccable defenders of freedom of expression.

Recognising the importance of information and education to the enhancement of human rights, peace and democracy, we regard the database as a contribution to the United Nations Decade of human rights education (1995-2005).

1. Aims of the Norwegian pioneer project

The main objective behind the NFFE project has been to design a *model*, both regarding *contents* of the database and co-operation between different fields of expertise. Thus the NFFE's *Project Steering Committee* represent various professional fields, with the National Library as professional advisor: The Norwegian Library Association, The Norwegian institute of Human Rights, UiO, The College of Oslo, Department of library education, NFFE, and the National Library, also acting as professional advisor. The project is managed by a leader and one project assistant, the latter - may I add, utterly and wholeheartedly devoted to the project.

The basis for NFFE's project is a worldwide survey conducted in 1997, with the intention of mapping existing resources and to determine the need for a bibliographical database on censorship and freedom of expression. The survey included Internet, National Libraries, international non-governmental organisations, institutions for research and culture, government bodies and international institutions. The survey confirmed the need to gather in *one* database the vast amount of information on censorship past and present, now held by a great variety of sources.

2. Network for co-operation

In 1998, based on the project description by the *Project Steering Committee*, NFFE invited more than 300 international organisations and institutions, human rights organisations and institutions of research, education and culture, naturally also including international and national government bodies, to participate in the database project in honour of the new library in Alexandria. According to the response, NFFE then established a closer co-operation with contributors, sources and selected National Libraries on all continents. NFFE regards this co-operation as important, both as some libraries are the keepers of national archives on former censorship, and also to ensure the professional quality of information. The response has been very positive, also from libraries that do not hold information on censorship, such as the British Library and the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. These are important supporters of the project, as well as being fantastic sources of information. So also *UNESCO's Unit for freedom of expression and democracy*.

Much of today's important documentation of the state of freedom of expression and censorship is produced by international NGO's. In recent years there has been a remarkable growth of independent freedom of

expression organisations, particularly in Southern countries, thus publishing of quality reports and documentation also have increased. Often such valuable publications are mainly obtainable through the organisations' own network. Making information on these publications available in one database has been one of our main ambitions. Of no less importance: collecting information on the huge amount of books written through the ages on the subject of censorship and freedom of expression. This part of the database we regard as an absolutely essential reference collection. Many of the books, long since out of print, are still to be obtained particularly through national libraries.

Another major aim is to document, as fully as possible, the actual books and newspapers that have been subject to censorship in various countries through the ages. A first priority has been to document some of the most outstanding periods of censorship in history, such as that of the Roman Catholic Church, the former Soviet Union or Nazi Germany during World War II. The reason being of course that some of these periods are not only devastating due to their long duration, but also due to the transnational aspect. The banning of books by the Roman Catholic Church lasted for 400 years, effective in all Catholic countries. In our consideration of historical periods of time to be documented in the database, the 20 "*Index Librorum Prohibitorum*" naturally were central. Moreover, these lists bear witness to the fact that fundamentalism is not a modern phenomenon.

The stern censorship of the former Soviet Union lasted for the best part of last century and was effective in all republics as well as occupied countries. The equally deadly censorship of Nazi Germany also covered all occupied countries. In time and space, severe censorship covers Europe as a huge blanket through history. Looking then at individual countries within these periods, we find countries such as Poland, virtually having been subjected to all these forms of censorship through a large period of its history.

Censorship has always been bravely met with resistance; most famous is Poland, boasting a vibrant and enduring illegal publishing (*samizdat*). During WW II the resistance also was strong in occupied countries such as Denmark and Norway. This well-organised illegal press, so important to the struggle for freedom in occupied countries, we also document, regarding this as an inseparable part of the long history of censorship.

In our choice of countries for documenting censorship of books and newspapers, we have naturally taken these considerations, as well as attempting to give a broad global perspective through selection on all continents, large as USA and Canada, small as Lithuania or Norway. As you may imagine, the history of censorship in Norway is thoroughly documented. The reason being twofold: Norway being the initiator should forgo with a good example and self-criticisms - in my mind - being the foundation for criticising others. Secondly, Norway - unlike many other countries - happens to have a complete documentation of all suppressed books through the history of printing, as well as a complete documentation of Nazi censorship and the illegal press.

A truly outstanding example of documentation is that of the Apartheid-area in South Africa, documented by the private company Jacobsen's Publishing, this impressive publication contains all items censored - from T-shirts and lighters to books, films and leaflets - during this shameful regime in South Africa.

This brings me to some of the challenges NFFE has encountered in our ambition to fully record past censorship in order to fill an information gap, and why we regard the co-operation with libraries as essential to the complete success of the project.

Although we have been met with overwhelming enthusiasm – relevant state agencies and departments not always counting among the helpful enthusiasts - we have encountered two major problems in our quest for the data: 1) actually finding the source, and 2) accessing the data. A great deal of time has been wasted being sent from pillar to post in countless national government offices. Furthermore, in a number of cases the data exists in special libraries, but consists of paper

archives, in some cases simply as collections of banned books.

A problem we have encountered in all parts of the world is that libraries are now struggling with less resources to complete more tasks. The electronic age, wonderful as it may be, has its price. For libraries then to undertake the task of transferring paper archives of forbidden literature to electronically available databases seems a far-off cry for many. Hence the positive response, often from libraries in countries emerging from heavy censorship such as that of the former Soviet Union, to our heroic effort and the offer of doing the work free of charge.

We on the other hand, greatly appreciate and regard the expertise of the world's libraries as invaluable to documenting censorship of the past. In addition, we are aware that documentation of censorship of books worldwide today is relatively random, while global documentation of media censorship is far more thorough. This is probably due to the fact that the majority of freedom of expression organisations originates from press organisations, and naturally is mainly concerned with the current struggle against censorship of the media.

Recognising the magnitude of the task, our project has at times borne the strong resemblance of a small expedition to the North Pole: trudging stubbornly towards a distant horizon. Standing here today also bears the resemblance of returning with the good news of actually finding the Pole, although much work is needed before we all can drive there.

3. Credits

The extensive and time-consuming practical production of the database "Bibliotheca Alexandrina" has been made possible thanks to the assistance of tutors and more than 20 students of the Faculty of Journalism, Library and Information Science at the Oslo College. The students working for more than 16 months in their spare time on the tedious job of manually loading the database, under the guidance of their tutors, and in collaboration with the NFFE project management. Also the group of translators, translating from their native languages such as Russian, Japanese, Italian, Lithuanian, Spanish etc. into English indeed deserves praise. Translating bibliographic information is not like translating any other text, as you may well know.

Among the large number of organisations and institutions that have greatly contributed to the database, I take the opportunity of giving credit to the National Library of South Africa and its former leader Peter Lor for his enthusiastic and supportive role.

The Norwegian Ministry of Culture has funded the database with approximately US\$ 95.000 over a three-year period. All our extensive work of research, communication, administration, fees for all operations and translating has been managed within this rather tight budget, thanks also to a good combination of enthusiasm and efficiency. To NFFE, it has been strategically important to prove that a major task such as this can be successfully established as a low cost project. Completing, as we now have done, the extensive groundwork, establishing networks and work procedures, we feel confident that future international funding will be available.

4. Future development

When the database is presented to the new library of Alexandria, the final word has not been said on censorship and freedom of expression. The ultimate aim is to register, as fully as sources will allow, all censored literary and artistic expressions *before* 1900, and through the 20th century as comprehensively as possible all censored material including the Internet. Recognising the magnitude of this task and the fact that this database is a pioneering project, it has been important for NFFE to establish the database as a *model*, dynamic in form and concept, designed to be developed through a network of international organisations and institutions, human rights organisations and research-, education- and culture institutions.

The key to successful development in the future lies in the establishment of an international Steering Committee and project administration. Through a steadily growing network of partners, the content will be expanded to include censorship of other media such as Internet and artistic expressions such as drama, film and visual arts. Equally important is to establish co-operation with countries that lack the resources to make documentation of their censorship internationally accessible.

In 1999, NFFE focused on planning an international model for continued development of the database. Thus preparations have been made for the establishment of an international Steering Committee and administration. In this network of co-operation, the leadership of the Library of Alexandria as well as Egyptian organisations for freedom of expression play key roles, as do the major international organisations; *IFLA* and *IFEX - International Freedom of Expression eXchange Clearing House*. *IFEX* currently has 54 members on all continents, representing the main global network of freedom of expression organisations.

When the project continues as a joint international venture, we expect the support of international institutions such as the UN High Commissioner of Human Rights and UNESCO's *Unit for freedom of expression and democracy*.

As building the network will be an ongoing process, we are pleased to have secured a network of expertise for the future of the database. Equally important is to invest today in the global co-operation and expert care of the database tomorrow. Ensuring future expertise is a major goal, and constituted one of the reasons for NFFE engaging the students of the Oslo College in the first place. We believe that co-operative projects such as this will give valuable impulses to the education of librarians and media-workers, and will serve to encourage institutions of higher education to actively participate in furthering international protection of free access to information and freedom of expression.

5. Facts about the database

A major consideration has been to ensure professional technical quality and compatibility of the database. Thus the database is produced and hosted by the Faculty of Journalism, Library and Information Science at the Oslo College. To ensure compatibility, the software in use is MARC based on US MARC standard. All translations having been made from original languages, observing the ISO-standards, naturally registering all titles in the original language.

Another important consideration has been to keep in mind the need for future initiatives and developments. One such important development, in the true spirit of freedom of expression, is to make the database available in other major languages than English, when technology allows for low cost transliteration. Completing this monument to the long struggle for freedom of expression will require time, resources and dedication. Yet this is but a small price to pay for the commemoration of all the thousands throughout history who lost their freedom or lives defending free expression.

Database of Publications and bibliographical data

The database contains ca. 6000 publications in a variety of languages on freedom of expression from sources available worldwide.

The publications include current (updated for 2000) reports and books, as well as publications out of print. This extensive part of the database covers all fields: drama, literature, film, artworks, radio, TV, Internet, libraries, the press etc., and all periods of time and countries. It also covers a vast spectre of subjects; moral, political, religious etc., including various national government white papers on censorship legislation, all relevant reports and documents from the UN Human Rights Committee etc. For the convenience of users, all items are furnished with source and place of access - libraries, institutions or organisations. Unfortunately,

including information on single articles on freedom of expression was beyond our capacity. Expressed as a need by many of our partners, especially in Southern countries where book publications at times are prohibitive, we believe that articles should be included some time in the future.

Censorship of books and newspapers world wide during the last decennium

The main source for this data is IFEX and the member organisations continue, daily reporting on attacks, particularly on the printed press, radio and TV and electronic media. This underscores the concern mentioned earlier, that reporting on censorship of literature seems more random. Systematic worldwide documentation of book – censorship is one of the areas where the IFLA / FAIFE expertise is certainly needed.

Although bibliographical data on current and historic censorship of books and newspapers from selected historical periods and countries on all continents constitutes almost 80% of the items in the database, it still constitutes but a small part of all the books and newspapers that have been censored through history.

Whereas bibliographic data on published literature on censorship and freedom of expression are relatively easily accessible from existing databanks, the data on censored books and newspapers are in some cases hard to come by. Either because the indexes are still literally hidden in government closets, or the task of retrieving the data is too demanding for the overworked and understaffed organisations or libraries. Efforts such as that of the National Library of Lithuania reconstructing the index of Glavlit censorship, or the South African publication "*Jacobsen's index of objectionable literature*", both serve as documentation of madness, and represent memory banks of literature otherwise possibly forgotten.

Obviously, documenting censored items *before* 1900 may hardly ever be complete. But after 1900, sources allow for a considerably more comprehensive registration of data. In this context, credit is due to the authorities of Australia, now having made electronically accessible the complete list of prohibitions from the Customs Office. Two years ago, when we contacted the Australian Customs Office, we were provided with paper lists of some of the literature that had been denied import to Australia during the latter part of the last century. We can not claim to have inspired the Australian authorities, but we certainly hope that the authorities in a great many countries will follow suit, filling the information gap on censorship and making our task all the more easy.

The countries documented: Australia, Canada, Chile, Denmark, England, France, Japan, Germany, Norway, Iran, Lithuania, Malawi, Russia, Poland, Peru, South –Africa, Turkey, Zimbabwe and USA.

Main principles and criteria's of selection

When deciding on selection of censored material to be included in the database, books and newspapers were the obvious choice, being by far the best documented, even though the information is not always easy to access. Censorship of music, films, theatre and other artistic expressions being more randomly documented. However, of no less importance, NFFE having limited resources and time, considers this to be an important development of the database, after the documentation of country by country censorship of books and newspapers.

6. Definition of censorship

Censorship is defined as the suppression or prohibition of speech or writing that is condemned as subversive to the common good. It occurs in all manifestations of authority to some degree, but in modern times it has been of special importance in its relation to government and the rule of law.

Based on this commonly accepted definition of censorship, NFFE has chosen as a major criterion *the grounds for censorship*. Thus entries are restricted to items that have been censored on

political, religious or moral grounds. A second criterion is *the censoring body*. Only items censored by state or governing bodies or state related bodies, are entered. NFFE underscores that entries are made according to the definition of censorship in each country.

Finally, allow me to give you a brief outline of the long history of censorship, this also serving as a very rough outline of the selected periods of time and countries.

Censorship has followed the free expressions of men and women like a shadow through history. So has the defence of freedom of expression. In the Greek communities, the regulation of the moral and political life of a people was deemed as a proper role of government. The playwright Euripides (480 -406 BC) defended the true liberty of freeborn men: the right to speak freely: "Who neither can nor will may hold his peace. What can be more just in a State than this?" While Plato in the "*Republic*", advocated censorship, particularly of the arts, as part of the development of the best possible regime.

Exactly when censorship began is hard to determine. But it is fair to assume that the ancient Greeks, sentencing Socrates to drink poison in 399 BC for his corruption of youth and acknowledgement of unorthodox divinities, were not the first to severely punish those violating the moral and political code of their time.

The very term *ensor* in English has its roots in the office of censor established in Rome in 443 BC, where the task of conducting censorship no doubt was considered honourable.

In Rome, as in the ancient Greek communities, it was assumed that good governance also included shaping the character of the people. Censorship as an integral instrument for rulers to guide their subjects and regulate individual conduct and morals, was common in other ancient societies such as those of Israel or China.

Free speech, no doubt a worry to ancient rulers, became even more so in the centuries to follow, when books were copied and more widely disseminated, thereby allowing subversive and heretical ideas to spread. The problem increased with the invention of the printing press in Europe in the middle of the 15th Century. Although printing greatly aided the Catholic Church and its mission, it also aided the Protestant Reformation and "heretics" such as Luther.

The Catholic Church, having had control of writings also through control of universities such as the Sorbonne, in 1543 decreed that no book might be printed or sold without permission of the church. 20 years later, Charles IX of France (1563) decreed that nothing could be printed without the special permission of the king.

In western history, the very term censorship takes on a whole new meaning with the introduction of the "*Index Librorum Prohibitorum*" - the lists of books banned for their heretical or ideologically dangerous content, issued by the Roman Catholic church with the Sacred Inquisition as the zealous guardians. Helpful measures used by authorities - both Catholic and non-Catholic - to control people's beliefs or thoughts were the development of creeds, such as the Nicene Creed. More sinister measures were the trials such as those of Joan of Arc (1431) and Thomas More (1535).

The first Index of Prohibited Books was drawn up by order of Pope Paul IV in 1559. The lists were issued 20 times through the centuries by different popes, the last issued in 1948, and finally suppressed in 1966.

As quickly as printing became a religious battlefield, it also became a target for the secular rulers of Europe. Scientific and artistic expressions, potentially threatening to the moral and political order of society, were brought under control through systems of governmental licence to print and publish. Through the 17th and 18th centuries the foundations of the modern struggle against censorship were laid. This system of

pre-censorship was the target for John Milton in his much disputed speech "*Areopagitica*" to the Parliament of England in 1644, where he also quoted Euripides, adding the weight of the ancient struggle for free expression to his own arguments. Milton's struggle has proved to be of special significance. Of no less importance to freedom of expression was the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States (1787), guaranteeing freedom of speech as well as of the press.

The close alliance between church and state in countries like Spain, Portugal and Italy made for an almost perfect system of controlling free expressions; the state authorising the publishing of books, the Inquisition effectively preventing diffusion of forbidden books - national publications as well as foreign -, banning and punishing the offenders.

The censorship that thrived in Europe was also exported to the forcibly colonised countries in the Americas. "The Spanish authorities were not only worried about the religious situation in Europe, but also in America. The possibility that America could be invaded with ideas from Protestant countries was considered a permanent threat" notes the Peruvian historian Pedro Guibovich in his article "*The Lima Inquisition and Book Censorship*" (1). The Inquisition established in Peru in 1568, was part of a colonial policy by Philip II of Spain, designed to deal with the political and ideological crisis in the Peruvian viceroyalty. The Peruvian system was a blueprint of the Spanish, entailing control of the import of books, the inquisitorial officers periodically examining ships and luggage in ports, inspecting libraries, bookstores and printing houses. When the Inquisition was established in Peru in 1569, the Tribunal's district ranged from Panama to Chile and Rio de La Plata.

Oppressive and sinister as the censorship no doubt was to Europeans and the peoples of the colonies of the Americas, nothing can compare to the devastating burning of the Maya Codex by zealous catholic monks. This unique literature all but lost to the world heritage and modern research, not to mention the terrible loss to the Mayas of the time, and their descendants.

Printing also spurned the development of news services and newspapers. Although private news services had been in existence ever since classical times, the newsheets were not available to the public. The first regularly printed newspapers appeared in about 1600 and rapidly multiplied, although frequently subject to strict censorship regulations. With the development of regular postal services, started in France in 1464 and in the Austrian Empire in 1490, dissemination of information was boosted enormously. However, the postal service also came to play a crucial role as an instrument of censorship in many countries, not least in times of war.

The elaborate bureaucracy of censorship established by the Catholic Inquisition, has no doubt been helpful in adapting the public to the notion of the normality of censorship, resulting in cultures of self censorship and the acceptance of surveillance of books in schools and libraries, not least in the domains of public concern: the impressionable minds of young readers. In the 19th and 20th century the benevolent censorship has become all the more prominent, not least in Western countries, where authorities primarily have argued their "responsibility for public morals". This has in turn led to strict control of the import of books, and has given countless teachers and librarians licence to censor libraries under pretext of the need to protect readers from morally destructive literature. Nothing is more characteristic for modern day censorship than the benevolent guardianship of readers. One of the most stunning examples of this line of censorship occurred in 1885 in the Concord Public Library in USA, when Mark Twain's "*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*" was banned for the first time. In the preface to "*Censorship - 500 years of conflict*" (2), Arthur Schlesinger reminds us that Huck Finn is still in jeopardy, for reasons different to those of 1885, but no more convincing. "In too many American communities today, cultural vigilantism, organised by the fanatical and the fearful, is still an active menace."

The methods of purging control; authorising printing, banning publications, and preventing import of foreign books have been favoured by a variety of countries and political authorities through the ages, not least by the Soviet regime, inside the Union and in all occupied countries. When Soviet

occupied independent Lithuania in 1940, a "bibliocide" started, lasting in effect until 1989, only interrupted in 1941-1944 by the German occupation, infamous for *their* book pyres and deadly censorship in Germany and occupied countries. In the study "*Forbidden Authors and Publications*" (3) Klemensas Sinkevicius describes the strategy of the Soviet censorship in occupied Lithuania, performed by zealous local inspectors, engaged by the infamous body of censorship known as GLAVLIT (4). "After the restoration of Lithuanian independence we had the opportunity to study the most tragic period in the history of Lithuanian libraries", Sinkevicius concludes. His study for the National Library of Lithuania, describing the process and organisation of the Soviet censorship, represents a painstaking work of reconstruction of history. The study is the first of its kind. Many of the works of Lithuanian writers only exist in the lists of banned and destroyed books.

The Apartheid regime in South Africa (1950- 1994), in upholding their cruel policy of racism, doted on severe censorship, torture and killings, not only to strangle the South African extra-parliamentary liberation movement, but to erase memory. The struggle against the Apartheid regime has been subject to numerous studies. Also, detailed information about all items that were censored have been carefully compiled by the South African Jacobsen publisher, the "*Jacobsen's index for objectionable literature*" (1996). This admirable work is restoring to memory and for posterity, all the details of the Apartheid cruelty.

Even though centuries and cultures apart, there is a striking resemblance between the arguments and zealotry of the Inquisition or the former Soviet Union, and that of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance in the modern Islamic Republic of Iran. After a period of a liberalised climate for publishing following the Islamic revolution in 1979, the war against Iraq (1981) and the struggle against opposition groups within the Islamic Republic gave the government cause to introduce strict censorship. When the war ended in 1988, censorship became a monopoly of traditional extremists, eager to purge the Iranian society of freedom-seekers and dissenters. The Supreme Council of Cultural Revolution (SCCR) issued in the spring of 1988 resolutions on limitations of publishing. With the aid of the revolutionary courts, offenders have often been charged with propaganda against the Islamic Republic and disturbance of public opinion, often resulting in executions.

Looking back at the history of censorship, one could almost suspect that totalitarian rulers of different ages studied the methods of their predecessors. The denouncement of "heretic" books as employed by the Inquisition of Medieval Europe, bears striking resemblance to the denouncement of "anti-communism" in the Soviet, of "Semitism" in Nazi-Germany, the denouncement of "communism and anti-American activities" in USA in the 50s and 60s, and not least in modern day Iran.

As common through history are the forced renunciation of the "False Faith" and the embracement of the "True Faith". Thus fanatical rulers have always attempted to ensure complete control, not only by purging libraries, but also by purging peoples minds, through implanting the mechanisms of self-censorship. This is the most destructive form of censorship; like a virus it attacks the integrity and moral of writers, causing shame and loss of self respect, belief in one's abilities and one's responsibilities. The ideas and thoughts censored in the minds of the writers can never be reconstructed. Self-censorship can only be prevented through relentless struggle for freedom of expression.

The illegal/underground publishing of all suppressed nations represents truly outstanding monuments to the people's enduring struggle for freedom of expression.

The severe censorship and intolerable propaganda machine of the Nazi regime, spurred a flourishing illegal press in occupied countries such as Norway, where listening to "foreign" radio or producing, reading or disseminate illegal newspapers was punishable with death. Also in Denmark, where 541 illegal newspapers were published, members of the illegal groups were executed or died in concentration camps because of their

work. The much vaster illegal (samizdat) press and publishing of the former East - Block countries during the Soviet reign did not only represent a firm stand against brainwashing, but also against the most devastating consequence of censorship - oblivion. From countries such as Poland, writers' manuscripts were smuggled out and printed abroad. Classical and contemporary works of foreign writers were translated into Polish and smuggled back into Poland (5).

Internationally organised defence of freedom of expression began in 1921 with the establishment of P.E.N. Engaging writers, editors and intellectuals across the world in the struggle against censorship, P.E.N Writers in Prison Committee, brought to the attention of the international society the victims of censorship, and thus made it hard for the perpetrators to keep their crimes secret. Since then the number of freedom of expression organisations have steadily grown, in recent years most notably in Asia, Africa and Latin-America, the very trouble spots of modern censorship. Reporting from within, from points of view other than those of Western organisations, these organisations' contributions are invaluable. The establishment of *International Freedom of Expression Clearing House* - IFEX in 1992 by leading international organisations, represented another major leap forward. In this truly global electronic network, that so considerably has boosted dissemination of freedom of expression information, the fastest growing number of members is Southern organisations.

Organised defence of freedom of expression was spurred internationally when the spiritual leader of Iran, Ayatollah Khomeini, in 1989 issued a death sentence (fatwa) against the British writer Salman Rushdie, and all his publishers and translators for his novel "*Satanic Verses*". In Norway this spurred the establishment of NFEE.

However honourable the origins of censorship may be, the fact remains that throughout world history censorship represented the most widespread and convenient instrument for rulers to suppress unwanted ideas and opinions, be they artistic or scientific, political moral or religious. Thus the legitimate need for any society to specify it's basic values and guide the individuals, has been grossly compromised through history, by transforming guidance and education into stern censorship, thus becoming a cruel instrument of repression and terror.

A policy of denial is still favoured by governments in many countries. This policy will be harder to uphold with the Bibliotheca Alexandria's database of indisputable evidence also available on the web. The fact that the information is provided by such a variety of partners and sources on all continents, will hopefully encourage many countries to make the information available, or at least grant us access.

The paradox of forgetfulness in the face of limitless access to information, or the even more painful paradox of history's worst crimes continuing to repeat themselves, can not be resolved through constituting a tool of memory such as the database "*Bibliotheca Alexandrina*". Changes are made through determined actions by people. This we know. We also know that public opinion, so eagerly courted by totalitarian and democratic authorities alike, when provided with the right and useful kind of information, will change, thus hopefully also one day preventing repetitions.

Notes:

1. "The Lima Inquisition and Book Censorship, 1570-1820" Study and Annotated Bibliography, by Pedro Guibovich, University of Columbia, USA 1999.
2. "Censorship - 500 years of conflict" an exhibition created by the New York Public Library, published by Oxford University Press 1984.
3. From the series of publications on Lithuanian libraries' historical sources and historical research: "Forbidden Authors and Publications". The first years of the Soviet occupation 15.06.1940 – 21.06.1941. Vilnius, 1994, by Klemensas Sinkevicius
4. Central Literature and Publishing Board for the Preservation of Military and State Secrets within the Council of Ministers of the Lithuanian (SSR) known as Glavlit.
5. "Bibliografia podziemnych drukow zwartych z lat 1976-1989": Biblioteka Narodowa, Institut

