

## Towards a national strategy for developing library and information services in Egypt

Reports – English Summary

**Dr. Mostafa Hossam El Din**

Cairo University, Department of Libraries, Archives and Information Science, Egypt

[Mostafa67@hotmail.com](mailto:Mostafa67@hotmail.com)

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### Abstract

Egypt's unique cultural heritage and its strategic regional role make the development of library and information services a national priority. Strengthening this sector is both urgent and highly influential for advancing digital transformation, preserving cultural heritage, and supporting sustainable national development.

This proposed national strategy seeks to transform library and information institutions from underutilized repositories into a strong, unified, and dynamic system. The envisioned system will operate with efficiency, effectiveness, and interactivity, fostering lifelong learning, innovation, and cultural pride among all citizens.

The proposal outlines a comprehensive national strategy for the development of library and information services in the Arab Republic of Egypt. It defines the strategic vision, articulates the guiding principles on which the strategy is based, and presents a SWOT analysis of the current state of the sector. It further identifies the main strategic pillars, proposes an implementation framework for the period 2026–2030, outlines critical success factors, and concludes with recommended procedures for the adoption and execution of the strategy.

### Keywords

Libraries and information services, Egypt, SWOT analysis, national policy

## Strategic Rationale and Vision

### Defining the National Strategy

The strategy is defined as a long-term, measurable, and comprehensive plan designed to serve as a roadmap for the state. It seeks to coordinate efforts across various institutions to ensure that resources are allocated effectively toward a unified national goal.

### Objectives for Developing the Sector

The necessity of this strategy is driven by four primary factors:

- **Human Development:** Supporting the "New Republic" by providing barrier-free access to information, which is essential for economic, social, and cultural development.
- **Digital Transformation:** Playing a leading role in the digital shift of Egyptian society by providing interactive platforms and promoting digital literacy.
- **Coordination and Efficiency:** Preventing the waste of resources and energy caused by fragmented, uncoordinated efforts.
- **Cross-Sector Partnerships:** Facilitating collaborations between the information sector and related fields such as ICT, education, scientific research, and publishing.

### The Strategic Vision

"To transform Egypt's libraries and information institutions from repositories of sources into modern, interactive information centers that provide all Egyptian citizens with equitable access to data and reliable information to meet their informational, cognitive, and research needs."

## SWOT Analysis of the Current Sector (2025)

The document provides a detailed "Four-Way Environmental Analysis" of the library and information services landscape in Egypt.

### 1. Strengths (Internal)

- **Historical Depth:** Egypt has a unique heritage dating back to the "House of Life" (*Per Ankh*) in 2600 BC and the Great Library of Alexandria.
- **Diverse Institutional Network:** As of 2025, Egypt possesses a massive infrastructure, including the National Library and Archives (established 1870/1828), hundreds of university libraries across 135 academic institutions, and specialized research centers like the National Agricultural Library.
- **Academic Foundation:** Nineteen government university programs have been training specialists in library and information science since 1951.
- **Professional Representation:** The Egyptian Association for Libraries, Information, and Archives (established 1946) provides professional standards and training.

### 2. Weaknesses (Internal)

- **Lack of Central Planning:** No single governmental body is currently responsible for national-level coordination and policy enforcement.

- **Data Gaps:** There is a critical absence of accurate, updated statistics regarding the number of institutions, their contents, or user density.
- **Funding Shortages:** Many institutions suffer from limited financial resources, affecting their ability to update technology or acquire new information sources.
- **Geographical Inequality:** An unfair distribution of services persists between urban centers and rural or remote areas in Upper Egypt and the Delta.

### 3. Opportunities (External)

- **National Mandates:** The updated "Egypt Vision 2030" calls for improving quality of life and fostering a knowledge-based economy.
- **Demographics:** With 61 million children and youth (56.7% of the population in 2025), there is a massive opportunity to build a tech-savvy generation.
- **Existing Platforms:** The **Egyptian Knowledge Bank (EKB)** provides a foundation for free access to global databases, and the **"Turath Misr" (Digital Heritage)** platform serves as a central hub for digitized intellectual output.
- **Global Trends:** Open Science and Open Access initiatives provide unprecedented access to scientific research.

### 4. Threats (External)

- **Negative Public Perception:** Libraries are often viewed as mere book-lending spaces or "leisure" spots rather than centers for lifelong learning.
- **Rapid Technological Change:** The fast pace of AI and emerging technologies requires constant funding and structural updates.
- **Brain Drain:** Skilled professionals often seek employment opportunities abroad due to better technical prospects.
- **Unreliable Information Sources:** Users increasingly rely on social media and unverified web content as alternatives to formal library services.

## The Nine Pillars of the National Strategy

The proposed strategy is organized into nine "Axes" of development:

### 1. Institutional and Legislative Development:

- Establishing a national coordinating body led by the National Library and Archives.
- Reviewing Intellectual Property (IP) laws to balance the rights of creators with the public's right to access for education and research.
- Drafting a **Public Library Law** to standardize operations nationwide.

### 2. Infrastructure Modernization: Building a "National Digital Library of Egypt"—a central cloud-based platform to house all digitized institutional content.

### 3. Digital Content Development: Expanding the EKB and establishing mandatory open-access archiving policies for all government-funded research.

4. **Service Development and Social Engagement:** Transforming libraries into interactive community centers that offer data analysis tools, digital literacy programs, and support for small businesses and "startup incubators."
5. **Cultural Integration and National Identity:** Documenting local physical and intangible heritage (folklore, crafts, dialects) at the governorate level.
6. **Adoption of Emerging Technologies:** Shifting to "Library Services Platforms" (LSP) and integrating AI, Blockchain, IoT, and Augmented Reality to enhance user interaction.
7. **Human Capacity Building:** Updating university curricula to include roles such as **Data Librarian** and **System Librarian**, and creating a national professional development program.
8. **Funding Diversification:** Increasing state budget allocations while encouraging self-generated revenue (e.g., premium services, 3D printing, space rentals) and seeking international grants.
9. **Governance and Quality Assurance:** Creating a national database for library statistics and implementing periodic performance benchmarks based on user satisfaction and impact.

### High-Priority Implementation Projects (2026–2030)

The document concludes by proposing four specific projects to initiate the strategy:

Project Name	Objective
<b>National Cloud Catalog</b>	A unified tool using cloud computing to index the collections of all participating Egyptian libraries.
<b>National Bibliographic Database</b>	A standard source for metadata for all information sources published within Egypt.
<b>Public Library Law</b>	A legislative framework to regulate the structures, management, and coordination of public libraries.
<b>National Data Model</b>	A standardized form for collecting comprehensive, reliable data on all Egyptian information institutions.