Alexandria endures in our imagination as the first model of cultural interaction – of cosmopolitanism, to use both classical and contemporary terminology – and as the cultural and intellectual capital of the ancient world. The intermingling of races and beliefs, and the exchange of ideas, undoubtedly produced the knowledge that modern scholarship still celebrates.

This book is a testimony that the value embodied by Alexandria and its Library continue to inspire noble-minded scholars whose pursuit for knowledge transcends boundaries and time. The breadth and scope of the papers presented do credit to the spirit of Alexandria – its multiculturalism, and its passion for science and scholarship. The book in our hands confirm that the multiculturalism of the Ancient World, rippling out from Alexandria to extend throughout the Hellenistic period and beyond, is as valid now as it was then – perhaps more so today, when globalization has given a new meaning to the internationalism envisioned by Alexander the Great centuries ago. Now, with the “clash of civilizations” dominating our discourse, it is pertinent to remember the lesson Alexandrea ad Aegyptum taught us: that the interaction between cultures can only lead to the betterment of the human condition and carry us to heights unimagined.

Ismail Serageldin
Librarian of Alexandria

The excellent contributions gathered in this book dedicated to the city of books, Alexandria, are undoubtedly traced along the lines of Amr and John's dialogue. Intolerance, which is borne almost always out of ignorance, threatens continuously the peaceful meeting and coexistence of peoples and cultures nowadays. Alexandria, its people and books remind us that the search for dialogue, the reflection on the forms of unity in diversity are at the same time our greatest heritage and the most dramatically pressing agenda.

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Abstract: Among all the Alexandrias, Alexandria of Egypt enjoyed the quality of universality. Despite the glory achieved by the city for more than a thousand years, only a few monuments from that city remain, which do not match the glory and the greatness of its past. Nevertheless these remains are expressive of diversity in different fields. In the light of recent archaeological discoveries, we realize that fusion in Alexandrian art began with the time of the first two Ptolemies. One would tend to think of Ptolemaic Alexandria as a city that incorporated Egyptian and Greek traditions in both physical and cultural aspects of its life. New artistic motives were created to express the intellectual and artistic richness of the different cultures that resided in Alexandria and were influenced by the city’s heterogeneous and cosmopolitan society. This paper is tracking the archaeological evidence on the universal trends in ancient Alexandrian art through an investigation of some monuments.

Although Alexander the Great had never saw a single building in the new city which he ordered to be founded on the northern coast of Egypt, the building project was undertaken by the first two Ptolemies who succeeded the great conqueror on the throne of Egypt. Few decades after its construction, Alexandria proved to have become the metropolis of the Mediterranean. Due to its harbours and lighthouse, it played the role of a main trading centre and enjoyed a flourishing economy. The Ptolemies tended to make their capital city a place of attraction not only for merchants and businessmen but also for men of letters and