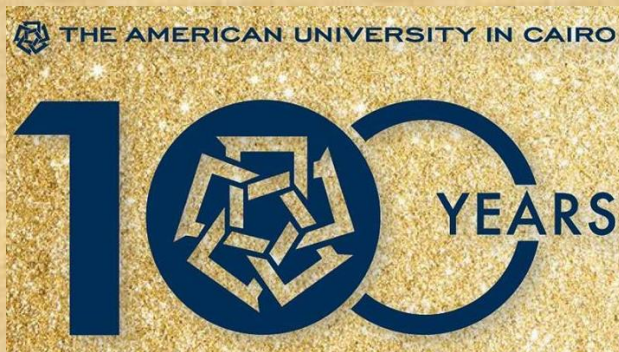


One Hundred Years of Lessons Learned: How The American University in Cairo's University Archives leveraged digital collections in service of our Centennial

Stephen Urgola, University Archivist



AMICAL Conference, American University of Kuwait, January 2020



**AUC Founder & President
Charles R. Watson**

THE CHRISTIAN CHAR-
ACTER of the University



*“The American University at Cairo is a
Bridge of Friendliness between America
and Egypt, between the English-speaking
world and the Arabic-speaking, between
Western Christianity and Moslem lands.*”

**Early Promotional
Material on Mission**

Upper Classmen
at work in the science
department.



THE FIRST EGYPTIAN GIRL TO BE GRADUATED FROM THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY AT CAIRO; MISS EVA HABIB

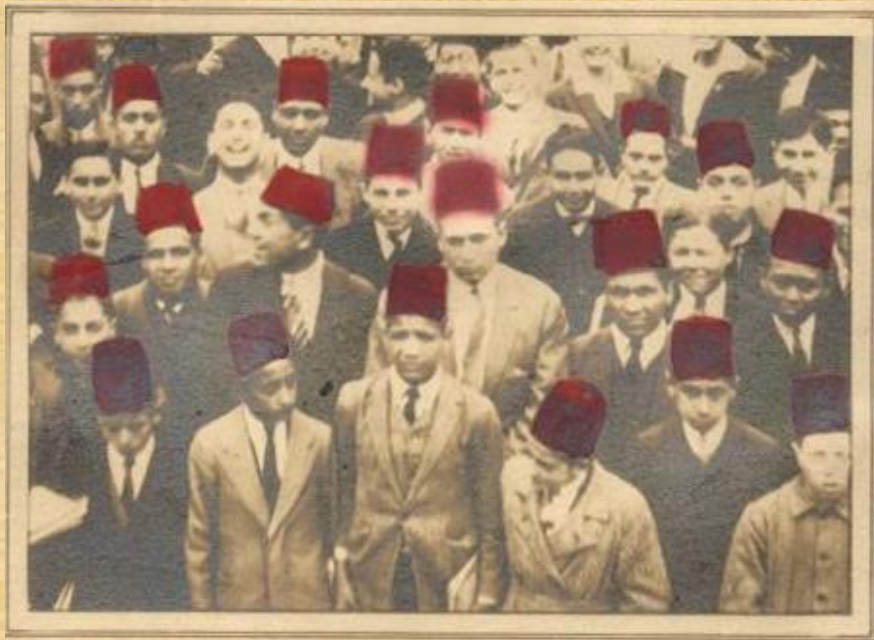


Pyramid 3 A.U.C. 1924

Sedefgjan

AUC "Pyramid", 1924

AUC Students: From Misfits and Minorities to Elites



Eighteen Nationalities Are Represented in the Student Body.
Almost Sixty Percent Are Moslem.



1920s

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY AT CAIRO

INCORPORATED AT WASHINGTON D.C. IN 1919

AN INTERDENOMINATIONAL CHRISTIAN INSTITUTION SERVING THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST

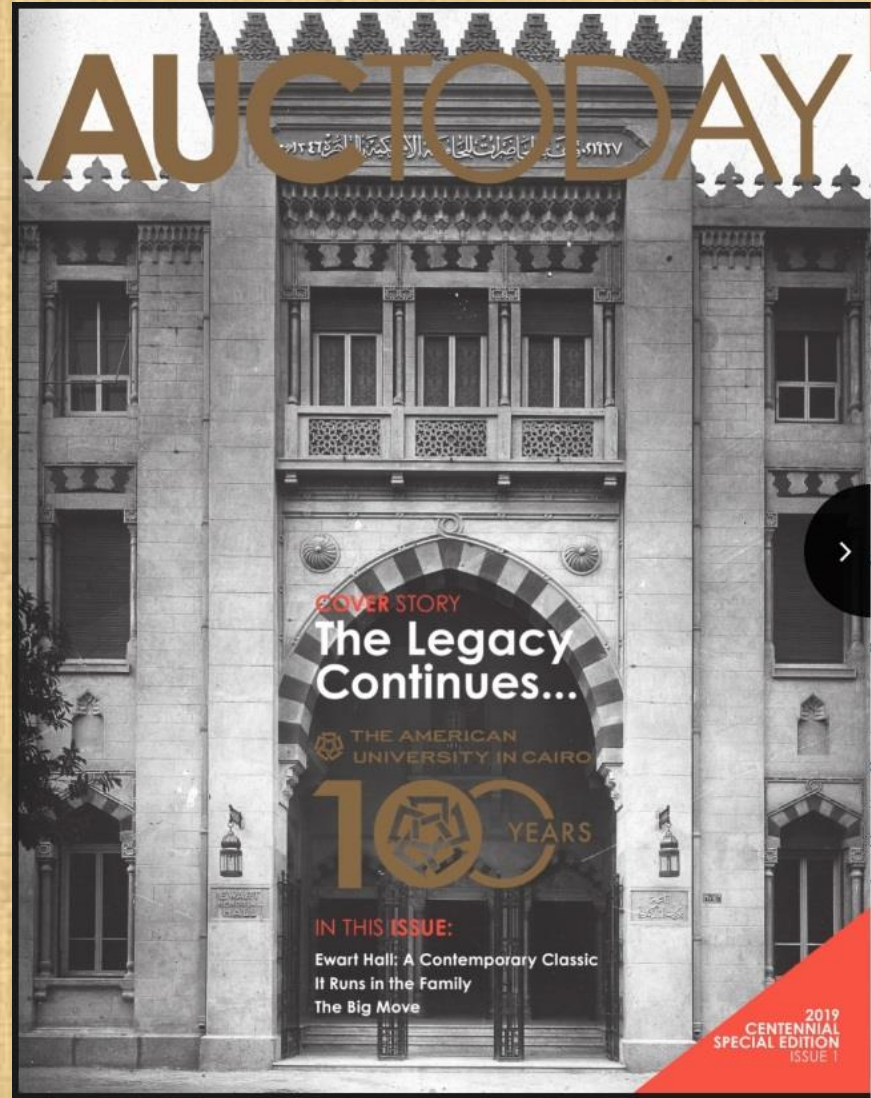
THE 1950 STUDENT BODY AT A.U.C. INCLUDES MANY NATIONALITIES



1950s

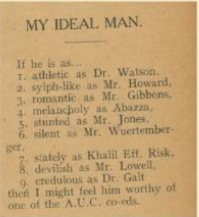
1980s

Supported AUC
Communications
Office's
production of
university
magazine
Centennial
issues



Provided timelines, images, story content, fact checking for magazine

AUC Professor Blase Donadio decided on the spur of the moment to buy a car during his three-day stopover in Rome, managing to bring it back to AUC with him. When he arrived, he described the students' exclamation: "The students were all agog to see the miracle car that was brought from Rome in six days. They immediately baptized her Zarifa, an all-inclusive name meaning anything from hellish to angelic. Decals were made by an art student to adorn the window and a woven red Zarifa doll to sit prominently on the instrument panel."




The AUC Review, April 10, 1936

Pierre Cachia '42
"Dr. Howard taught me English. I can still remember his particular technique. Whenever I submitted a paper, if there was one word that wasn't quite right, he would just put a tiny little tick with his pencil underneath it. There was no indication of what the right word ought to be, just a little tick. And I would go home, puzzle over it and spend a couple of hours searching through the dictionaries until I found the right word to replace it by. Well, I think I still do this when I'm working on an article or book. If I put down a word that isn't quite right, I almost see Dr. Howard's little tick underneath it, and I still spend a couple hours searching through the dictionaries until I find the right one."

James Quay, worked at AUC, report from the 1920s:
"Dr. Robert S. McClenahan was the Dean of the American University in Cairo. He was quite an able man, of big stature and fine presence. He was nearly blind by the time he died. The last time I saw him, he told me about standing on the street, on the corner, on the edge of 5th Avenue, New York, alone waiting for the traffic to stop so that he could get across with safety. As he stood there waiting, a friendly hand took him by the arm and gave him a little push, and the two of them went across the street in perfect safety to the other side. This stranger turned to McClenahan and thanked him very much. And McClenahan said, 'What are you thanking me for?' 'Why, for getting me across the street,' the stranger responded. 'You see, I'm blind.'"

From the Archives



The 1987 Caravan posted a piece titled
"Cats! Cats! Cats!" about how the sixth-floor lounge of the Falaki girls' hostel had been filled with cats, who "seem to have mistaken the place for a shelter."

P.J. Vatikiotis, 1944-1948
"General AUC characters in those days were the Zabit, a sort of discipline officer, who, when he was not prowling about, sat at a desk on the right-hand side beneath the central stairway of the main building. He made certain people want to class, did not lie about smoking on campus or covorting with the odd female, and wrote the list of the day's post on a blackboard precariously hung against the iron railing fence on the main gate."

James Quay, worked at AUC, report from the 1920s:
"Dr. Watson loved to entertain, and at his house, they would set a table and everything would be arranged. During dinner, Dr. Watson would break in with a new subject all set in his mind that would make a good conversation piece. In fact, I believe he had a whole string of topics for conversation scribbled on the inside of his cuff to assure that the table conversation would be kept on the rails and not run off into small matters that weren't pertinent."

FIRST IN EGYPT

Whether expanding its educational offerings or taking the lead in pioneering initiatives, AUC has many firsts. These are just a few of them.

AUGUST FIRSTS

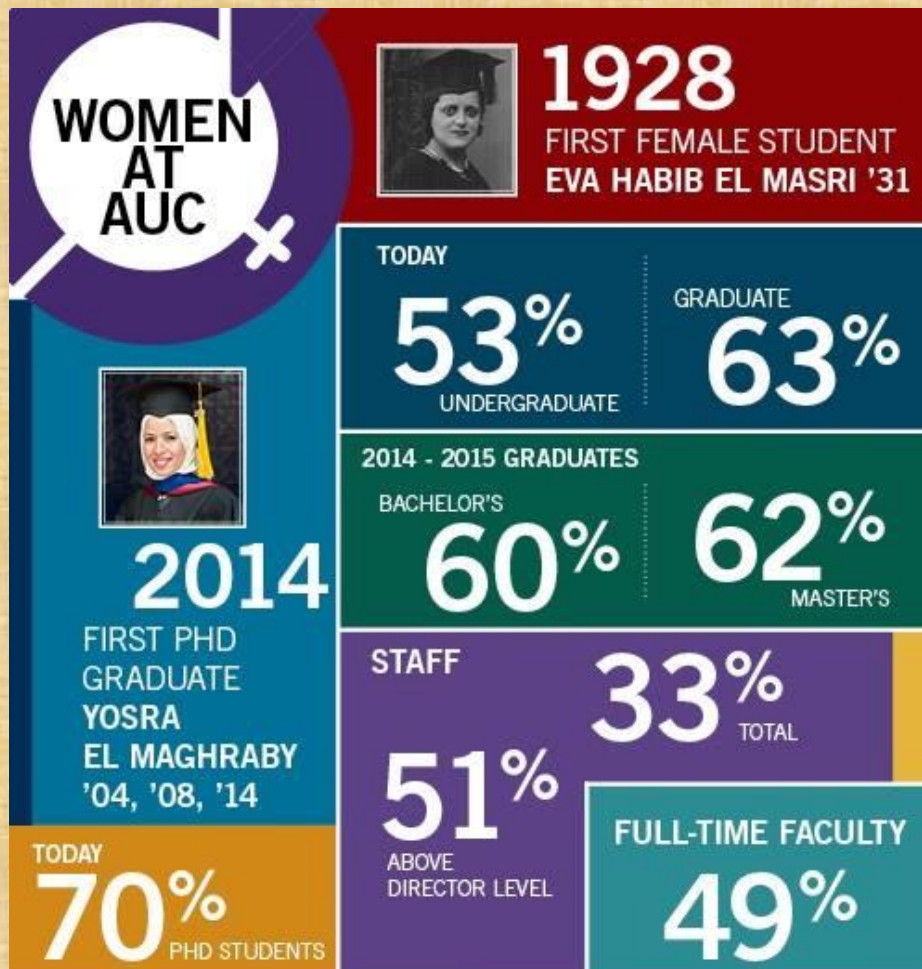
FIRST WORLDWIDE

Triple crown accreditation in public affairs education for Master of Public Administration and Master of Public Policy of the School of Global Affairs and Public Policy

Master's in migration and refugee studies: first worldwide to combine migration and refugee studies with a focus on the Middle East and Africa

FIRST OUTSIDE THE UNITED STATES

Centennial social media content based on University Archives sources



Centennial website material like images and videos drawn from Archives

← → × auc100.aucegypt.edu ☆

100 YEARS **GIVE 100** **SHARE YOUR STORY**

MEMORIES

Future

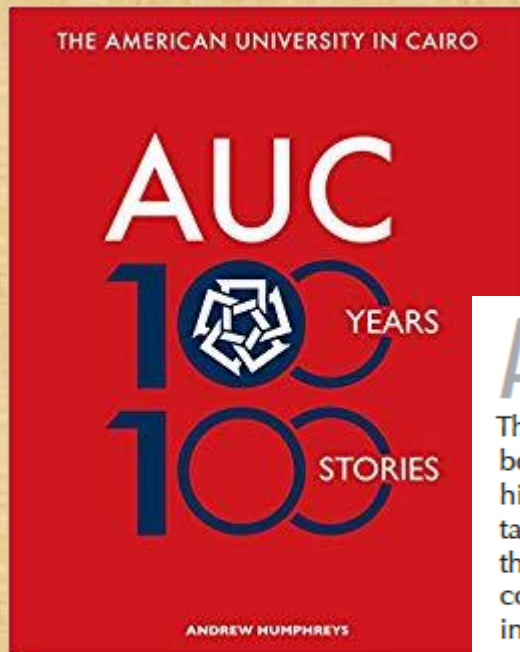
#AUC100 doesn't just reflect on the countless memories made in every corner, every class and on every occasion, whether then or now, but it's also about the global impact that its people are making in the world. We do cherish your memories and stories, whether told or untold. Share them with us, and let the world know more about the faces of AUC.

Steve Farely

My life was transformed by AUC

Thomas Bartlett: An AUC Legacy Watch later Share

AUC 100 Years, 100 Stories Centennial book produced via close collaboration between author and University Archives



ABOUT THIS BOOK

This book is not a history of AUC. Instead, this book is a celebration of AUC. It is one hundred short stories (some are historical in focus, many are not), one hundred snapshots, all of which, taken together, hopefully combine to capture something of the spirit of this unique American–Egyptian educational and cultural institution. It collects voices and memories, raids the archive for key documents and intriguing items of ephemera, and draws on evocative imagery, some vintage, some shot only recently for the ongoing Centennial campaigns. It also draws on a century of published work about AUC, from brochures and letters to student newspapers, magazines, and online posts.

AUC 100 Years, 100 Stories

Centennial book

History

7

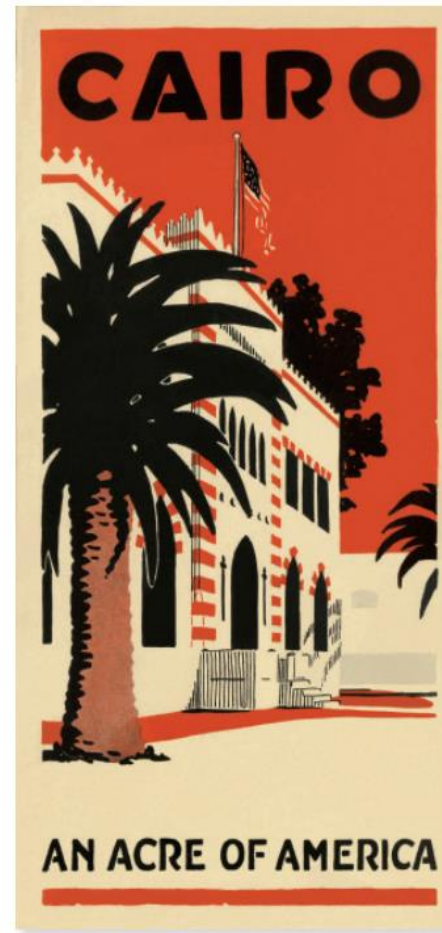
HOW AMERICAN IS THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY?

AUC benefits from close associations with America but that has not always been the case

There is a neat phrase that appears in a 1926 issue of *The AUC Review*, where AUC is referred to as “the American institution which binds Egypt with America.” There was a lot of truth in this at the time. America figured little in Egypt in a political sense in the early twentieth century. The United States appointed a first consul-general to Egypt in 1848, upgrading to a formal legation in 1922, but its most influential presence remained its church missions, most notably the American Mission. The missionaries thought of themselves not only as Christian evangelists, but also as ambassadors for the United States and promoters of American culture. It followed that the missionary-founded AUC, with its central Cairo campus, imported American teachers, and American-style syllabus, was seen as a flag-bearer for America in Egypt.

While the funding and methodology of the university were American, the content of the teaching was deliberately free of national bias. The curriculum did not place any emphasis on American history, literature, or culture. Asked why this was, AUC president John Badeau once answered, “We don’t want to be thought of like a French, or a British, or an Italian school, with a kind of cultural superiority. We didn’t come to Americanize Egypt. We came to serve the country.”

For the most part, being closely associated with America was generally to the university’s benefit but, inevitably, policy makers in the White House were not always going to have the same outlook on the Middle East as an independent establishment rooted in Egypt. And not all Egyptians would be able to discern the difference. In December 1947, for example, crowds protesting the United Nations decision to partition Palestine gathered in front of AUC chanting, “Down with the United States. Down with the American University.” When the following year the United States government was quick to recognize the newly formed state of Israel, AUC president Badeau sent American president Harry Truman a cable of protest, reflecting not only his own views but those of many of the faculty and students. >>



◀ When this promotional brochure was printed in the 1920s, AUC was very literally “an acre of America.” Under the terms of the Capitulations foreigners in Egypt enjoyed extra-territorial rights, so the land occupied by AUC was American, subject to American law



**PRESIDENT #2
JOHN BADEAU
(1944–53)**

Badeau followed up a degree in civil engineering with a master’s in sacred theology from Columbia University, where he also studied Arabic and Muslim philosophy. He began his career in the Middle East in 1928, spending seven years as a missionary in Mosul and Baghdad. He came to AUC in 1936 as a professor of ethics, becoming a dean before he succeeded Charles Watson as president. Wonderfully fluent in Arabic he was widely admired by all. In the early 1960s he served as the American ambassador to Egypt and became a personal friend of President Nasser. >>

Centennial book: Archives input

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STORING UP HISTORY

Without its University Archives, AUC would not have quite so much to celebrate

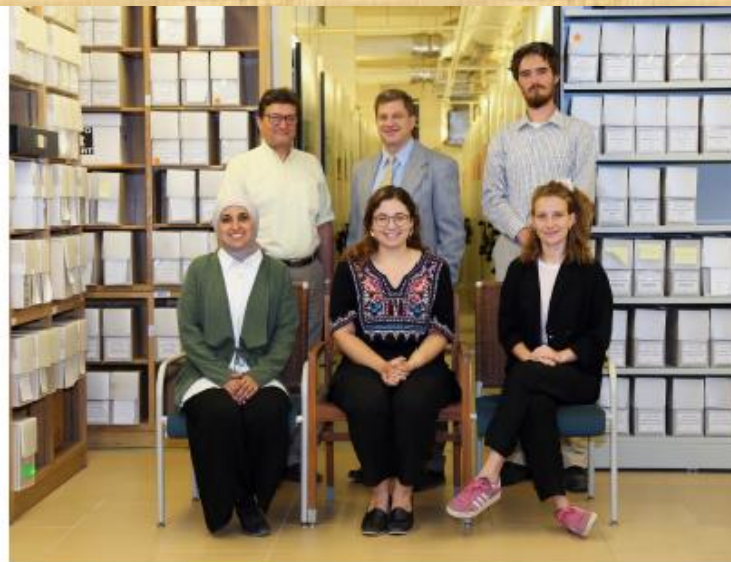
If there is one department that has truly embraced the marking of AUC's centenary, it is the University Archives. In fact, this is the sort of occasion the archives were created for.

"Part of the purpose of the archives," says Steve Urgola, "is to establish AUC's identity, capture it, and commemorate it—that's what this whole Centennial book is all about." According to Urgola, who is the university archivist and director of AUC records management, and who came to AUC and Egypt from New York in August 2001, the archives really only came into existence because of another, earlier celebratory book. That book, *The American University in Cairo: 1919–1987*, was written by Lawrence Murphy, a young American faculty member hired to teach history, who then made the history of AUC his pet project. He convinced the administration to sign off on a book on the subject, and then commenced a search for sources. He discovered the files of Charles Watson and other early records stashed in boxes on the roof of the old palace building, preserved by what must have been a more forgiving climate back then. He retrieved these, added material kept in the library and other places, and so began the University Archives.

For a while the Archives were kept at the library on the Greek Campus under the care of Kareem Helmy, then in 1992 they were moved to the newly-established Rare Books and Special Collections Library in its villa on Sheikh Riham Street, where they were looked after by Mohamed Abu Bakr, who these days is director of AUC's conservation lab.

Today Urgola heads a small team, mostly based on the top floor of the library. Nada Yassen joined the archives in 2004. "The purpose of the Archives is to document and to preserve AUC history first, and then Egypt's heritage and social life, and to make these materials available for researchers at AUC and from around the world."

Over the years, the profile of the Archives has expanded dramatically. It is frequently tapped by external researchers for academic topics, family history, or quirky quests, such as the elderly lady who was searching



for evidence of a man she once knew, a codebreaker in World War II, who said he once taught English at AUC. "One person," says Urgola, "contacted us about tessellations, which are tiles, because they were interested in a certain tile pattern found in Egypt that wasn't found anywhere else in the world and they'd seen this pattern in an image from AUC's old campus, Downtown." The Archives have gone from a handful of reference requests a year to hundreds—and in the run-up to the Centennial, possibly thousands.

Part of the reason for the growth in usage of the Archives is down to its presence online. Ryder Kouba has been the digital collections archivist since 2014, busy overseeing a program of scanning documents, placing them on the Archives website, and publicizing the collection via Facebook and social media. "We want people to use our material and even if you live in Egypt, it's hard to get on campus without an ID card, so it's important to put things online." Currently, says Kouba, the Archives have around forty thousand items available to search and view digitally.

The size of the Archives means that even for those that know it best, it still constantly throws up surprises. "One of the stories in this book is about the vertical campus," says Urgola. "I'd never heard of this before but it's there in the Archives. So yeah, we're always making discoveries, all the time." ☺

▲ The archivists. Back row, left to right: Emad Khalifa, Steve Urgola, Ryder Kouba, front left to right: Nada Yassen, Natalya Stankov, Martha Tode

"Part of the purpose of the archive is to establish AUC's identity."

Steve Urgola,
university archivist

AUC 100 Years, 100 Stories Centennial book: Extensive use of oral histories



NOTES ON SOURCES

AUC's University Archive (UA) was the major source for this book. Of particular value were the oral history recordings, in which archive staff interview long-serving faculty, administrators, staff, alumni, and students about their life and work at the university. This is an ongoing project, the results of which are available to all via the AUC Rare Books and Special Collections Digital Library.

Displays on Campus using historic images from Archives



“Then and Now” Displays

Displays on Campus

Installation based on student design, arranging Archives images into words of Centennial slogan



Displays on Campus

Installation based on student design,
arranging Archives images into words
of Centennial slogan



Exhibitions: Student Newspapers



Research using Archives sources for Centennial related gifts



Research using Archives sources for Centennial related gifts

The Egyptian government has minted AUC's centennial coin, designed by five AUC students.

This accomplishment was the culmination of a summer of work, research and brainstorming for graphic design students Ahmad Khaili, Ingy Fawzy, Lana Kurdi, Mariam Ibrahim and Mariem Abutaleb. Aiming to highlight the impact of the University's architecture on AUCians past and present, the minting of the coin finally made the group's vision a reality.

To create a coin for AUC's centennial, the five students took part in a mentored workshop supervised by Nagla Samir, associate professor in the Department of the Arts and co-chair of the Materials and Collateral Taskforce for the centennial, and Ghalia ElSrakbi, instructor in the Department of the Arts. "They are the dream team," Samir exclaimed. "Ahmad and Mariam are seniors, Lana and Ingy are juniors and Mariem is a sophomore, so the team brought three-generation perspectives to the design."

The team conducted extensive research before beginning the design process. Over the summer, they administered an online survey to determine what the campus meant to old and new AUCians. They then held multiple focus groups, narrowing down their designs until the two finalists were shown to President Francis Ricciardone. The final selection embodied what AUCians had expressed in the survey: that everyone related to AUC's architecture, specifically its idiosyncratic arches and portals. "We worked throughout the summer, mainly on research," explained Khaili, one of the student designers. "We went to the library and the archives, and this is where the design stemmed from. We wanted to base our design on AUC's architecture, so we looked at books about that and studied photos of the campus."

For the students, it was very important that the coin would resonate with the AUC community. "This wasn't just a theoretical project; it was something that was going to be made," said Ibrahim, another student designer. "Your eyes and your professor's eyes are not the only ones that will see this. Everyone has to understand it, and it has to be of value for all. Architecture is the connecting dot between all the generations."

Explaining what he hopes people would envision when they look at the coin, Khaili noted, "I hope they get a feel of the heritage of this institution and realize that it's been there for a very long time."

The final coin features two striped arches on one side, one slightly smaller than the other, bowing together to create an impossible bridge where they alluringly meet in the middle. "We picked the old and the new arches and explained them together," Ibrahim said, describing how they used a rendition of AUC's classic arch to connect the old with the new. It seemed fitting to ElSrakbi that the campus would be the inspiration behind the coin's design. "The campus is where

everything happens, where people meet, where people study,

through the minting process gave the students valuable real-world work experience. "It was the first time I produced something that would go out into the world; it's very meaningful," Khaili expressed.

The students also designed a unique packaging for the coin. While it has not been finalized, the essential concept was to make the package interactive, with fold-out flaps containing information about AUC and 100 years of its events. "It's not designed to go into a drawer. It's designed to stand," Samir explained proudly.

There will be both a silver and a gold coin for sale. The silver coins will be available for sale at the AUC Bookstores, while some of the gold coins will be given as gifts to donors and trustees. The rest will potentially be auctioned off. AUC ordered 1,000 silver coins and 20 gold coins. The coins will be sold for a bank set value. Samir hopes that AUC will always keep one gold coin, "perhaps in a time capsule or in the University Archives," she said.

The coin is ultimately a celebration of AUC's 100 years of learning, growth and service in and outside of the University walls. "As well as commemorating this important occasion, these coins will help raise money for student-related causes and scholarships," explained Lamia Eid (B2 '92, head of the Materials and Collateral Taskforce for the centennial).

"One hundred years is a big thing, so commemorating this event is really important," added Fawzy, a student on the team.

As ElSrakbi explained, the coin is a perfect vehicle because it withstands time. "The coin, as a medium, has been there for so long, as an object to preserve the memory of an event that happens," speculated ElSrakbi. "By collecting it, you preserve this event for the future, but you are also trying to talk about the past."

Commemorative Centennial Coin

By Claire Davenport

Students design AUC's centennial coin, minted by the Egyptian government

and where faculty and students spend time together. The campus itself is a kind of time capsule," she said.

Besides reflecting the values and history of AUC, the coin's design also carries symbolic weight. "The arches connect the past to the future, and the portals take on another meaning. They become a portal to the past, where 100 years ago, people walked through the first arched portal to AUC," Samir explained.

Beyond the design, the five students who worked on the centennial coin also got exposure to the technical side of the design process. They had to make sure the coin's design, including logo size, spacing and lettering — all conformed to government standards. "Working on a coin is not something you get to do every day. It was cool because we got to see the technical part of it," said Kurdi, a student on the design team. Samir and ElSrakbi both believe that creating the coin and going



The student design team: Ahmad Khaili (back, center), Mariem Abutaleb (middle, left), Mariam Ibrahim (center, right), Lana Kurdi (bottom left) and Ingy Fawzy (bottom right)



Archives Content for Events: Promotional Material, Video Showings

“AUC in the Arab Cultural Imaginary”

Samia Mehrez

Professor of Modern Arabic Literature, Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations;
Director, Center for Translation Studies, AUC

Department of Arab and Islamic Civilizations

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aric@aucegypt.edu



Archives Collections digitized in advance of Centennial, during

← → ↻ ⓘ Not secure | digitalcollections.aucegypt.edu 🔍 ☆

THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة

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AUC Rare Books and Special Collections Digital Library

AUC Campus Photographs

The AUC Campus Photographs Collection contains photographs, architectural sketches and plans, from the buildings across AUC's campuses over the years.



▶

AUC Student Newspapers

First published as *The AUC Review*, the *Campus Caravan* has been serving the AUC community since 1925. The *Caravan* acquired its current name in the late 1930s. This collection contains digitized issues dating back to the founding, though not every volume is complete. Due to inconsistent volume numbering, it is recommended the issues ...



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Historic Egypt and AUC Films and Videos

The AUC Historical videos contains films and movies from the 1920s until the 1980s, most of which are promotional films for the university. Also included is a [1930s color home film](#) of a trip to Cairo from New York City and a [CBS report](#) on AUC following the 1967 War.



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AUC Board of Trustees and Administrative Meeting Minutes

The American University in Cairo Board of Trustees Meetings Minutes digital collection primarily includes meeting agendas and minutes, as well as additional meeting documentation such as budgets, correspondence, reports, and memoranda. The collection includes minutes ranging from the first meeting of the Board of Trustees of Cairo ...



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AUC Yearbook Collection

First published in 1931, AUC's yearbooks document campus life over time. Included in most yearbooks are student and faculty portraits as well as photographs of student life, campus, athletics, and organizations. The yearbook has been published by AUC students under a number of different titles, including as the final issue of the ...



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AUC Oral Histories and Reminiscences

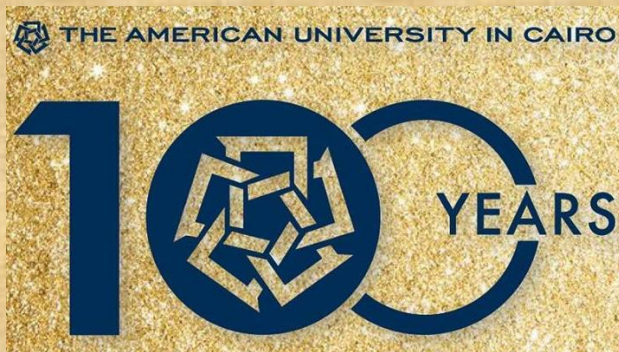
The AUC Oral Histories and Reminiscences collection contains interviews done as part of the "AUC History on Tape" project. Interviews were conducted between 1969 and 1973 by Lawrence Murphy and Manucher Moadeb-Zadeh as well as by Rare Books and Special Collections Library staff beginning in the early 2000s. Additionally, essays.



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AMICAL Conference, American University of Kuwait, January 2020