

Jordan River Foundation Internship Reflection

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7/18/08

Three weeks ago, I arrived in Amman, Jordan to begin my summer internship with the Jordan River Foundation. By now I have adjusted to the heat, settled in my new neighborhood of Jabal al-Weibdeh, in “Old Amman,” and picked up some important phrases of colloquial Arabic. Learning to navigate the city's labyrinthine road system has been a challenge, as have other cultural differences, but I've been helped along the way by countless friendly Jordanians, including the women of JRF. I have also had the opportunity to take several daytrips to other parts of Jordan, where I've witnessed both artifacts of ancient history and breathtaking natural beauty.

After several days of orientation to the work of the Jordan River Foundation, including visits to their centers for child abuse prevention and intervention, I began to collect contacts for my field research into the local production and consumption of children's literature. JRF has asked me to ascertain the current state of children's publishing in Jordan – supply and demand, areas of unmet need, profit margins, etc. -- in order to determine how they as an organization could effectively engage in a child literacy project that could tie in with the storytelling programs they already administer as part of their work in child safety and children's rights. I am carrying out this study through a series of interviews, focus groups, and quantitative data collection, visiting bookstores, publishing companies, and educational centers around Amman. This week, I am spending lots of time at the 12th Amman International Book Fair, which lasts 10 days and hosts dozens of publishing companies from around the Middle East and the world, featuring thousands of books. It has been fascinating, and a great source of contacts and information for my project.

It is easy for me to see why Jordanians love their country and are so proud of it. I look forward to learning more about the local culture, economy, and politics as I continue my research and my life in Amman.