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 values 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 justice to the spirit of Alexandria—to multiculturalism, and its passion for science and scholarship. The book in our hands confirms that the multiculturalism of the Ancient World, springing from Alexandria to extend throughout the Hellenistic period and beyond, is as vivid and vital as it was then—perhaps more so today, when globalization has given a new meaning to the interplay between scientists by Alexander the Great centuries ago. Now, with the “clash of civilizations” dominating our discourse, it is pertinent to remember the lesson Alexandria 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, showing that the interaction between cultures can only lead to the betterment of the human condition and carry us to heights unimagined.