

TRANSLATION

Speech of Professor
Yahya M. Ibn Junaid

Co-Winner of King Faisal International Prize
For Islamic Studies 1998/1418H.

Saturday 14.2.1998 (17.10.1418A.H.)

In the name of Allah, the Merciful, the Compassionate

Your Royal Highness Prince Sultan Ibn Abdul Aziz
Second Deputy Premier, Minister of Defense and Aviation
And Inspector General
Your Royal Highnesses,
Your Excellencies,
Distinguished Guests,

One of the merits of the King Faisal International Prize is the diversity of its topics. This diversity encourages researchers and scholars from distant fields of specialization to compete for this honour.

I am deeply honoured to be one of the recipients of this year's Prize, more so by sharing it with my Professor, Dr. Abd AL-Sattar AL-Halwaji.

Both of us are specialized in an area vaguely understood by many in our society. In contrast to the wide recognition by western societies of the vital role played by library science and information in promoting research and knowledge, few people in the Arab world seem to be aware of the profound impact of this discipline on the process of learning.

Apart from being indispensable sources of literature and ideas, modern libraries assume the roles of pursuing fast technological advances and facilitating communication and rapid transmission of information to scientists and researchers regardless of their location. Human knowledge has advanced significantly in recent times and precise, up-to-date information is required by specialists in virtually all fields of science and humanities.

By choosing the subject of libraries as a topic for this year's award in Islamic Studies, the King Faisal International Prize provides support to library science specialists and draws attention to the importance of that discipline in our lives. By rewarding me for my work on the association between endowments and libraries in Islamic history, the King Faisal International Prize also seeks to emphasize the importance of financial support to libraries.

The spread of Islamic libraries and the high standards attained by those libraries during early Islamic history reflect the appreciation of early Muslims of the importance of such institutions, but little could have been accomplished without financial support through endowments and other philanthropic activities. In short, endowments were the driving force behind the existence and spread of Islamic libraries which, in turn, played a key role in the advancement of Islamic civilisation. Therefore, in our endeavors to regain our place in the modern world, we must pay greater attention to supporting libraries and information centres. This entails both an appreciation of the vital role of libraries, and an earnest desire to support financially their existence and development.

I would like to conclude by thanking the King Faisal Foundation and to the general secretariat of the King Faisal International Prize, as well as all institutions that nominated and selected me for this prize, for their appreciation of my humble endeavors.
God bless you all.