

NEWS RELEASE

Lori Wood, **Salinas Public Library**

Phone: 831-818-5033

woodlori@sbcglobal.net

Library site: www.salinaspubliclibrary.org

Salinas Public Library Challenges the Mother of All Libraries to a Literary Duel Salinas, *City of Letters*, Takes on the World

November 12, 2009 — Salinas, the City of Letters. Librarians across the world were stunned Tuesday to receive news that the Salinas Public Library has challenged the library of another great City of Letters—the legendary **Library of Alexandria** in Egypt—to a literary duel. The Chief Librarian of the *Bibliotheca Alexandrina* has accepted Salinas' challenge on behalf of the novelists of Egypt, and the literary world is holding its breath as news of this international incident spreads. Following is the text of Salinas' challenge, which appeared Wednesday on the website of the **Library of Alexandria**:

**Calling Alexandria's Someday Novelists!
Salinas, California Challenges You!
Write a Novel in the Month of November!
Salinas, California, *City of Letters* and Birthplace of John Steinbeck,
Challenges Alexandria, Egypt to a Literary Duel through NaNoWriMo**

November, 2009 — In an act of irrational literary abandon, the Salinas Public Library has issued an international challenge to the Library of Alexandria, Egypt: Let the novelists of our cities of letters engage in a literary duel during the month of November as they strive to write a 50,000 word novel in one month. Why? Because the world needs more laughter, everyone loves exploits of remarkable literary ambition, and reading and writing are about freedom. And November is *National Novel Writing Month*, lovingly called "NaNoWriMo," when 100,000 people from the far corners of the earth will join in the spirit of daring and unlikely exploits. It is a month of brazen challenges, outsized claims, and international incidents of the literary kind. **Join Us!**

This is not so crazy! Salinas' native son John Steinbeck wrote his 454-page opus *The Grapes of Wrath* in five short months—at the rate of about 31,000 words per month. If you would like to embark on the most daring literary adventure of your life, sign up to take us on! This will connect you with a worldwide network of someday novelists, a high-humored bunch of writers who will tilt at anything. Particularly the novelists of Salinas, who can't wait to square off against the novelists of Alexandria.

www.salinaspublishing.org

The Salinas Public Library. Come Get Us!

The ancient **Library of Alexandria**, founded at the beginning of the third century BC, was the most famous library of the ancient world, charged with collecting the world's knowledge. It flourished under the patronage of the Ptolemaic dynasty, and convened scholars from across the ancient world to write and work together. The Library and its Museum, or "House of the Muses," created a model that influenced the structure of today's universities. Scientific method was first conceived and put into practice at the **Library of Alexandria**. The original **Library of Alexandria** was partially destroyed on several occasions, and by the middle ages was the stuff of legend. In 2002, the *Bibliotheca Alexandrina* was inaugurated near the site of the ancient library, and now carries the tradition of the **Library of Alexandria** forward for future generations.

The Salinas Public Library, John Steinbeck's library in Salinas California, received worldwide attention in 2005-06 when Salinas nearly became the first city in the United States to vote to close its library. An international uproar ensued: citizens, writers and celebrities worldwide mobilized to save the Salinas Public Library. This outcry demonstrated the critical importance of the Library in the life of the city, and when the citizens of Salinas passed ballot *Measure V* to support the library as part of essential city services, the story of the saving of the Salinas Public Library was heard around the world.

“The Salinas Public Library has much in common with the **Library of Alexandria**,” said Elizabeth Martinez, Library Director of the Salinas Public Library. “Both libraries faced great challenges, and their demise was mourned across the world, but both libraries rose triumphantly to recreate themselves. We’re going to give the **Library of Alexandria** a run for their computers. The Salinas Public Library may be small, but it’s tough.”

Join the Salinas Public Library in Salinas’ challenge to the **Library of Alexandria**. If you would like to embark on the most daring literary adventure of your life, email Lori Wood, Program Manager of the Salinas Public Library, at woodlori@sbcglobal.net, or call her at 831-818-5033, then sign up at www.NaNoWriMo.org and make your home town Salinas.

November is National Novel Writing Month: Expect brazen challenges, outsized claims, and international incidents. www.NaNoWriMo.com.

This program launches “Salinas: City of Letters,” the second year of the collaborative programming presented by the Salinas Public Library and the National Steinbeck Center. This program is funded by a National Leadership Grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and will include the Centennial year of the Salinas Public Library, founded in 1909, and celebrating its 100th birthday in fall 2009.

www.salinaspubliclibrary.org

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