

MELCOM (U.K.)

Minutes of the 78th Meeting held in SOAS Library on Tuesday 10th July 2007

The meeting was preceded by the Eighth Pearson Lecture, which was delivered by Muhammad Isa Waley with the title:

The importance of manuscripts in research on Islamic culture: some case studies

Present

Ahmed Abu Zayed	Exeter
Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb	SOAS
Catherine Ansorge	Cambridge
Colin Baker	British Library
Heather Bleaney	Index Islamicus
Karima Boudjilouli	al-Furqan Foundation
Humeyra Ceylan	Markfield
Peter Colvin	SOAS
Mastan Ebtehaj	Oxford, St Antony's
Waseem Farooq	Institute for Study of Muslim Civilizations
Nadeem El-Issa	Joppa Books
Dinah Manisty	Institute for Ismaili Studies
Martyn Minty	Oxford, Bodleian
Maureen Pinder	Leeds
Geoffrey Roper	Institute for Study of Muslim Civilizations
Stefan Seeger	Institute for Study of Muslim Civilizations
Mamtimyn Sunuodula	Durham
Muhammad Isa Waley	British Library
Colin Wakefield	Oxford, Bodleian

1. Apologies for absence

Paul Auchterlonie, Debbie Cox, Lesley Forbes, Kathy Lazenbatt, Anne Poulson, Waleed al-Shobaki.

2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

Because the Chairman, Paul Auchterlonie had not been able to be present because of a tooth that needed operating upon urgently, the Secretary chaired the Meeting, and Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb kindly agreed to compose the minutes.

One item that had been marked for action had not been dealt with and had been reintroduced as item 6 "Encyclopaedia of Islam and Index Islamicus online".

3. Accounts and post of treasurer

Stefan Seeger had begun to take over from Nadeem El-Issa as treasurer.

The accounts were presented:

Reserve Account as at 8/12/2006: £2865.01

Current Account as at 9/11/2006: £ 988.24

A suggestion was discussed that MELCOM UK should charge a membership fee, but the consensus was that this was not a good idea, as it might discourage some members from attending, and that there wasn't any pressing need for funds.

4. Implications of restructuring the Library on Arabic collections at University of Exeter

It was reported that wide-ranging restructuring was taking place in Exeter. The Arabic collection and AWDU were being merged and Paul Auchterlonie and Ahmed Abu Zayed were being offered new posts, in addition to their previous ones. In the case of Ahmed Abu Zayed it was that of Digital Assets Manager. These changes would definitely have a very great impact on both of them, and Paul would be reporting on further developments at the Winter meeting.

5. Research skills for young Iraqi academics: Grants provided by the British Council, Baghdad (Ahmad Abu-Zayed)

Ahmed Abu Zayed reported on fifteen grants of £10,000 each, that had been made available to young Iraqi academics to bring them up to speed on modern sources for their studies. Paul and Ahmed are working on an Information-literacy module on a VLE for the purposes of distance teaching, using WebCT. The three highest scoring grades would be sent over to Exeter for further studies.

6. Encyclopaedia of Islam and Index Islamicus online

Heather Bleaney reported that Brill's platform was not finished yet and that they intend to make important enhancements to it. The first updated version is planned for mid-August and any comments should be sent to Heather as soon as possible so that she can pass them on to her contacts at Brill, who would like to know what people most wish for. Heather also commented that the dataset for Index Islamicus which is available at Brill-online has been cleaned up and corrected in some important respects, whereas corrections cannot be made to data already on CSA.

Index Islamicus will continue to be available on both CSA and EBSCOHost platforms as well as via Brill-online.

7. Lis-middle-east and the MELCOM UK Website.

It was suggested that significant contributions in the field of Middle Eastern librarianship, in addition to the Pearson Lectures, should be added to the MELCOM UK website.

Members are reminded that they can send their details to Ahmed for them to appear on the MELCOM UK web-pages.

8. Pearson Memorial Lecture

The Eighth Pearson Lecture was delivered by Muhammad Isa Waley, and its title was: "The importance of manuscripts in research on Islamic culture: some case studies".

Muhammad Isa is willing to have it mounted on the Melcom UK website with some added pictures (PDF would be a preferred format). Previous speakers may agree to do the same.

Geoffrey Roper suggested that the Pearson Lectures should be more publicized as they are academic events and would benefit from having a larger audience. It was mentioned that as MELCOM UK meetings tend to be held out of academic term as this makes finding accommodation easier, academics are often away at those times, and this probably limited the numbers attracted.

9. MELCOM International Conference (Mastan Ebtehaj)

29th Melcom International conference, Sarajevo June 2007

The Melcom International conference was held in the beautiful city of Sarajevo. The conference was jointly hosted by the Bosniak Institute and the Faculty of Islamic Sciences of the University of Sarajevo.

The Sessions took place in the Gazi Husrev Bey Hammam, which is adjacent to a building of modern architecture where the Bosniak Institute's library and huge collection of art work is housed.

The 29th conference was a great success.

Originally, 24 papers were selected for the programme, but due to visa problems and some other reasons 7 speakers could not attend, and in the end 17 papers in all were presented. Asim Zubcevic & Amina Rizvanbegovic Dzuvic, the conference hosts, had done their utmost by providing the required letters for the speakers to obtain their visas.

It was a particular pleasure to see some of the older members at the conference, like Jan Just Witkam and Derek Hopwood. The total number of participants was 60 all in all.

During the conference the revised constitution was distributed amongst the participants to be voted on at the conference business meeting.

At the business meeting, Arnoud Vrolijk was re-elected for one more term; and the constitution was voted on and accepted.

The minutes of the business meeting are available on-line. (<http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/mec/melcomintl/>)

Muhammad Isa noted that the success this conference was partly down to the tremendous input from the local academics and librarians as they were anxious to put their country and libraries on the map; and the fact that fewer papers than expected were presented meant that the conference felt less hectic. There was more time for discussions and outings, which made up for the disappointment of the missing papers.

The next conference (30th MELCOM International conference) will be held in Oxford from 23rd to 25th June 2008. As announced in Sarajevo, Mastan has made a provisional accommodation booking with St Anne's College, their neighbouring college.

The accommodation booking form will be circulated in September/October and it is strongly suggested that participants make their booking as soon as possible: Oxford is not only expensive but also very popular with tourists all year round, and it is likely that they may face difficulties finding a place to stay.

Finally, do keep on checking Melcom International Web page for the latest news and information. We have just added a new entry for forthcoming conference.

10. Developments in member libraries and reports on periodicals

Cambridge

Report on the Arabic/Islamic collection:

The pattern of acquisitions to the section has been consistent with previous years and the annual budget has been maintained at its former level. New publications have been purchased mainly from Suleiman (Lebanon and Syria), Leila books (Egypt and Gulf), al-Muthanna (Iraq) and Masomeh Shambayati in Iran. Purchases in smaller numbers have also been made in Turkish, Syriac and Central Asian languages. Also recently purchased has been a collection of over 150 new publications in Kurdish from Iraq largely on modern literature, history and sociology. In addition, a significant collection of documents relating to Iranian oppositional parties and co-organizations from 1907-2000 has also been acquired recently. These are primarily copies of newspapers, partly published in Iran and partly by writers in

exile, including several titles of journals published by political women's organizations up to the mid 20th century in Iran.

Cambridge University Library has joined The Islamic Manuscript Association (TIMA) and representatives will be present at their forthcoming conference in Cambridge in August this year. A codicology workshop has also been organized this year by TIMA in cooperation with CUL and follows the conference on 1st-4th September.

The Near Eastern section of the CUL website is in process of being updated. In addition to additional descriptive information and details of services provided by the department, the site will provide a link to the digitized version of the printed catalogue of the UL's Middle Eastern manuscript collections by E.G. Browne, R.A. Nicholson and Arthur Arberry with a structured facility to browse the contents and search the indexes.

During Yasmin Faghihi's year of maternity leave which ended in January 2007 the Department was staffed with a part-time post held by Catherine Anson, former librarian of the Cambridge Oriental Faculty. The post is now worked as a shared position and this arrangement will continue into the future. There is a part-time assistant position in the Department which is at present to be filled.

Durham

They are still gathering Sudanese materials; they recently received 21 boxes of pamphlets from Sudan.

The pamphlets collection has been separated from the periodicals' one, and that should make them more searchable and accessible.

The merge in 2003 of the Politics Department and Middle East Department has been a success as it has attracted more young academics. This department is attracting an increasing number of postgraduates.

Exeter

Ahmed reported in items 4 and 5 of the different changes going on at the Exeter library.

Exeter has recently been integrated in COPAC.

He also mentions that Exeter is using *The Depot* as their repository. The Depot is a national research repository hosted by Edinburgh and made available for all libraries that do not have their own repository yet. The Depot was launched in early June, with links to institutions which already have their own repositories, to avoid duplication. It is searchable through the Intute Repository Search project, at <http://www.intute.ac.uk/>

Leeds

They are big changes happening in the academic Arabic and Middle East Studies Department, which will probably ultimately lead to changes in the library. The two medievalists (Ian Netton and Dionisius Agius) at the head of the departments have either gone or are going, the management is keen to replace them by younger

people with more interest in the modern Middle East and politics. This will doubtless have an effect the library's purchases, which have up to now consisted primarily of medieval Islamic texts.

In the library, the role evaluation exercise led to 3 faculty team librarians being red-circled and threatened to loss of salary. They appealed successfully and won and they will keep their salaries as they were. For the others, nothing changed.

Markfield: Islamic Foundation

They have opened their library to the public (with an annual subscription fee of £30) and so far they have achieved 43 members, which is a good number considering that Markfield is a village.

They have of course their regular student members and work with them to produce a publication with books reviews among other items. There were 2 issues so far.

Lectures and workshops on various subjects (one workshop was on miniatures) have been organised, inciting more public ones to come and, and with hopefully an increase in membership.

Humeyra, inspired by the last Melcom International Conference, would like to organize an exhibition/lecture about Bosnia in August, possibly featuring Bosnian music players and said any help with that would be welcomed. She'll pass the information on the Lis-middle-east.

Humeyra announced that she will leave the Islamic Foundation Library next March.

Oxford

Bodleian Library

Sarah Thomas is the new director of Library Services since February 2007. She was previously the Cornell University Librarian.

They are prospects of great changes but none can be reported yet.

Lesley Forbes (Keeper of the Oriental collections) will be leaving in September 2008 and her post will be discontinued.

St Antony's College - Middle East Centre library

The library has, for the second consecutive year, received an acquisition budget allocated by OULS (Oxford University Libraries Services), to purchase books and maintain its journals annual subscription.

The 50th anniversary of the Middle East Centre was celebrated over the weekend of 29th June - 1st July, during which the plan for a new library, archive and conference hall, designed by Zaha Hadid, was unveiled.

London

British Library

Debbie Cox will be on career break from next January, which means that the selection work and acquisition will be a bit on hold.

The massive exhibition "Sacred" is taking much of Colin Baker's time at the moment. It will be held till the 23rd September and is not to be missed. There is a webpage dedicated to it on the BL's website.

Al-Furqan Foundation

At the moment, they are looking for an adequate library system to handle Arabic script records, and in the meantime, they are busy transferring their records from the 4D platform to a Unicode compliant one.

Institute of Ismaili Studies

Dinah had to leave earlier and was not able to deliver a report, but she left leaflets of the exhibition currently held at the Ismaili centre ("Spirit and Life", an exhibition of masterpieces of Islamic Art from the Aga Khan Museum Collection, 14th July- 31st August).

The Institute of Ismaili Studies is now on the MELCOM Gateway

Institute for Study of Muslim Civilizations

Their OPAC is still not working as they have trouble with their library system software: the romanized characters are not searchable; the multiscript cataloguing (original non-latin script and romanized script) is functioning well though.

SOAS

Pat Jamal, who has gone on maternity leave in April, had a baby boy called Theodore.

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb has returned from maternity leave. She is present at this meeting and will be back to work on 16th July 2007.

11. Date and place of next meeting

Humeyra Ceylan proposed that the next winter meeting to be held in Markfield. It is to take place on Tuesday 8th January 2008.