

MELCOM (U.K.)

Minutes: 83rd meeting

The 83rd meeting took place at the University of Westminster, Regent Street Campus, London, on Monday 11^h January 2010 at 3.00 pm.

The Business Meeting was preceded by two presentations, the first by Dr Lucy-Jane Collard, Senior Arabic lecturer at the University of Westminster who gave a brief historical review of the history of Arabic language teaching in the University. The second presentation was by Dr Jamil Sherif, an independent researcher, who spoke about his work on tracing, through printed and archival materials, London-based Muslim social and political activism from the 1880s.

Present:-

Ahmed Abu-Zayed	Exeter
Afifi al-Akiti	Oxford
Catherine Anson	Cambridge
Jasmine Ansari	Westminster University
Paul Auchterlonie	Exeter
Heather Bleaney	Index Islamicus
Karima Boudjillouli	al-Furqan Institute
Humeyra Ceylan	Markfield
Peter Colvin	SOAS
Debbie Cox	BL
Mastan Ebtehaj	St. Antony's, Oxford
Waseem Farooq	Institute for the Study of Islamic Civilisations
Maureen Pinder	Leeds
Geoffrey Roper	London
Waleed el-Shobaki	Manchester

1. Apologies for absence:-

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb	SOAS
Colin Baker	BL.
Yasmin Faghihi	Cambridge
Muhammad Isa Waley	BL
Dinah Manisty	Bodleian
Ursula Sims-Williams	BL

2. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising:-

Waseem Farooq reported that, contrary to the report in the previous minutes, the Library of Institute for the Study of Islamic Civilisations did not currently have a Library manager.

3. Accounts

The Chairperson reported on the financial situation in the absence of a Treasurer. There were no outstanding financial matters other than a £200 invoice to be paid in connection with the previous meeting in Manchester. Thanks were extended to Stefan Seeger who had served as Treasurer since 2007. Karima Boudjillouli was confirmed as the new Treasurer, proposed by the Chairperson and seconded by Jasmine Ansari.

4. Melcom (UK) Website

Ahmed Abu-Zayed, the Webmaster, put forward for discussion several ideas on how the MELCOM website could be improved and extended and a general discussion was held covering a range of ideas. It was suggested that it would be an improvement if the 'News' page could be extended and regularly updated to include brief reports on projects and on changes taking place in member institutions. The inclusion on the web pages of the historical run of minutes of the MELCOM (U.K.) meetings had been delayed but the Secretary agreed to take this forward as soon as possible. The original scans of the documents could be stored in the digital repository at Exeter University.

5. Melcom International Conference

The Chairperson reported on the plans for the 32nd Melcom International Conference to be held in Cordova on 19-22nd April 2010 which were progressing well. Arrangements should be finalised by the end of January 2010. A number of Melcom (UK) members plan to attend. A new logo for Melcom International has been designed at a cost of €1000.

6. Progress on digitisation projects

SOAS

SOAS has made a successful bid with Yale for a cooperative funding initiative from JISC and the America funding agency NEH for a digitisation project which will last for one year from September 2009. The acronym for the project is Y-S IMG which stands for Yale-SOAS Islamic Manuscript Gallery.

The concept is an ambitious one for a virtual manuscript reading room which will bring together electronically everything needed by a scholar working in this field, by supplying images of manuscripts, and searchable versions (through OCR) of manuscript catalogues and important bilingual dictionaries.

SOAS has selected six Persian manuscripts from its collection, seven manuscript catalogues, including the first part of Uri's 1787 *Bibliothecae Bodleianae codicum manuscriptorum Orientalium*, and three dictionaries: the Steingass Persian-English dictionary, Biberstein-Kazimirski's *Dictionnaire arabe-français*, and Dozy's *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes*.

While the digitisation of the manuscripts should be straightforward and has commenced satisfactorily, the OCR process on 18th century Latin and Arabic/French and Persian/English is presenting many challenges.

Cambridge

The Oxford/Cambridge collaboration is aiming at the creation of around 10,000 brief manuscript catalogue records from printed and handwritten descriptions. It is intended that the catalogue will include descriptive details in the original script, corrected LC transliteration and make extensive use of LC authority headings and subject headings.

The Oxford/Cambridge and the Wellcome team have joined forces at the development stage and produced a joint template for the project, which will be used through the OXYGEN editor (an inputting tool for inserting the data in XML). A schema has been developed using TEI for the description of manuscripts (ENRICH) and has been modified and extended incorporate the missing elements required for the description of Islamic manuscripts.

Oxford

Dr Afifi al-Akiti reported that the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies had funded and recently completed the digitization of Arabic manuscripts from the Pococke collection, one of the oldest Islamic collections at the Bodleian.

It was agreed that it would be useful to publicise progress on digitisation projects via the LIS-MIDDLE-EAST mailing list and on the Melcom website to reach a wider audience of interested colleagues.

7. Developments in member libraries.

Cambridge

The level of funding support for the Department has remained the same as in the previous year and the rate of new acquisitions has remained constant though the value of the funding has fallen in real terms and the funding is disappearing noticeably faster this year.

Catherine Ansorge and Yasmin Faghihi both of us attended the TIMA Conference which was held in Cambridge in July and both also attended and assisted with the organisation of the TIMA manuscripts workshop held in September.

The application which was put forward to JISC for a project to create an on-line catalogue of the Islamic manuscripts collection in partnership with the Bodleian was successful. The Project officially started in September last year and since that time the emphasis has been on the development of a cataloguing template suitable for the data. Meetings have taken place with the Oxford team and also with the Islamic manuscript cataloguing team from the Wellcome Library who have a similar, though not identical project underway. Office space has been earmarked, training sessions set up and inputting staff are soon to be appointed.

A grant application from TIMA for funding to assist with the conservation and digitisation of the early Qur'an palimpsest (Or.1287) was successful. Work continues

on the manuscript's conservation. Some technical details still remain to be resolved before digitisation can go ahead.

Progress is being made on the descriptive brochure of the Islamic manuscripts collection. The first draft of the text is now complete and images prepared. It is hoped to go ahead with the text editing and the design stage soon.

Exeter

Ahmed Abu-Zayed reported that digital copies of PhD thesis on Islamic studies for the last 10 years are now freely available. Digitised copies of over 1000 thesis in Islamic studies have been processed. Paul Auchterlonie, who continues to work in a part-time position reported on progress with the cataloguing of Kurdish publications, some without original script in the record due to technical complications with some characters.

Leeds

It was reported that a 10% cuts in funding projected for the coming year had put on hold any plans for extending the Library. It also introduced an air of uncertainty into all funding support and into questions over future job security.

London

Al-Furqan Library

The al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation website was launched this year and the Library OPAC can now be accessed through the Foundation's website.

One of the Foundation's recent most and popular publications is the critical edition of the 'Fihrist' of al-Nadim, edited by Ayman Fuad Sayyid, published in 2009. Other new works have also been published - the 'Maqasid al-Shariah' Bibliography: of the 5 volumes planned, 3 are available, 4 and 5 are currently at the printers. The Foundation's overseas branch has published the first 2 of the 16 volume of the 'Encyclopedia of Makkah Al Mukarramah'. The third volume of 'Al Madinah Al Munawwarah' in Arabic has now been published.

British Library

Muhammad Isa Waley is now working on a part-time contract. The digitisation of PhD theses into the 'Ethos' project has been completed. Significant reductions have been made in the cataloguing of back-logs of around 16,000 Arabic publications. There is now only a back-log of recent publications. There are some collection moves planned for some older collections; publications from 1900 will be moved into storage at Boston Spa during 2010-11. Some collections from store in Woolwich will also be moved to Boston Spa. The BL was not successful in its bid to get JISC money for Islamic manuscript cataloguing.

Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

The library has moved from Bedford Square to 210 Euston Road. The collection is on the shelves now and accessible to users. The library is sharing space and location with the IIS Library, but the two libraries are not merged. Stefan Seeger's position has been advertised, but has not yet been filled.

ISMC launched three new series in partnership with Edinburgh University Press in October 2009: Exploring Muslim Contexts, In Translation: Modern Muslim Thinkers and Muslim Civilisations Abstracts. Four volumes published from these series are entitled: Islam: Between Message and History, Development Models in Muslim Contexts, The Challenge of Pluralism, and Encyclopaedias about Muslim Civilisations.

SOAS

Significant practical changes are taking place in the arrangements of the book collection as a result of a major refurbishment of the Library. Many books are being removed to remote storage during the refurbishment and will not be available. Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb is about to go on maternity leave and a replacement for her has been advertised.

Westminster

There has been an increase in the availability of e-resources relating to Middle Eastern, Arabic and Islamic studies via the University's intranet.

Index Islamicus

The routine indexing work continues as usual. A new publication has just been produced 'Bibliography of Jews in the Islamic world' edited by Maria Angeles Gallego, Heather Bleaney and Pablo Garcia Suarez. Brill, 2010.

Manchester

There has been a major development at Manchester with the provision of 'Manchester eScholar Services' to provide an information gateway for academic researchers, research managers, research support staff, librarians, web developers and IT support staff. This can be found at:- <https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/>.

Waleed el-Shobaki has accepted a position at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia and his position in Manchester has now been advertised.

Markfield

The Islamic Foundation Library has been organizing lunch-hour lectures over a period of 3 years. These lectures have been very popular in Markfield village and regular attendees suggested that we should have an Interfaith Group. Therefore, the library launched Markfield Interfaith Group during National Interfaith Week in November. The Group will meet every 3 months with different activities. Funding to support this initiative had been applied for from the Community Development project, which supports local interfaith activities. Articles about the group appeared in CILIP East

Midlands branch newsletter, local magazines and local church newsletter. We hope to increase the profile of the library in Markfield and Leicestershire by offering different services. Also, the library's website and online catalogue is being updated and the online catalogue will not be functioning for a period of 2 months.

Oxford

Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies

Dr Afifi al-Akiti reported that the former Laudian Chair of Arabic at Oxford University, Professor Wilferd Madelung, made a bequest of his private collection to the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies Library.

St. Antony's College, Oxford, MEC Library

It was reported that the Library would soon be installing new library management software. The 'Aleph' system had been chosen and it is planned that installation would be completed within the next 12 months.

8. July meeting and Pearson lecture

It was reported that Professor Francois Deroche had been requested to deliver the next Pearson lecture to which he had agreed. It will form part of the programme for the July meeting.

Date of next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 5th July 2010 in London, provisionally at SOAS.