

# **MELCOM (U.K.)**

## **Minutes: 84th meeting**

The 84th meeting of MELCOM (UK) took place at SOAS, Thornhaugh Street, London, WC1, on Monday 5th July 2010 at 2.30 pm.

The business meeting was preceded at 12 pm by the 11th Pearson lecture given by Professor Francois Déroche entitled - "Qur'anic studies in mid-19th century Europe: encounters and missed opportunities".

### **Present:-**

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb	SOAS
Jasmine Ansari	Westminster University
Catherine Ansorge	Cambridge
Paul Auchterlonie	Exeter
Heather Bleaney	Index Islamicus
Karima Boudjillouli	al-Furqan Institute
Peter Colvin	SOAS
Debbie Cox	BL
Mastan Ebtehaj	St. Antony's, Oxford
Waseem Farooq	Institute for the Study of Islamic Civilisations
Dinah Manisty	Bodleian
Maureen Pinder	Leeds
Geoffrey Roper	London
Joseph Smith	SOAS
Mamtimyn Sunuodula	Durham
Paul Tate	Manchester
Dawn Vaux	Faculty of Oriental Studies, Oxford
Alastair Watson	OCIMCO Project

### **1. Apologies for absence:-**

Afifi al-Akiti	Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies
Colin Baker	BL
Yasmin Faghihi	Cambridge
Muhammad Isa Waley	BL
Ursula Sims-Williams	BL

### **2. Minutes of previous meeting:-**

No comments or corrections were made to the minutes of the previous meeting.

### **3. Accounts**

The Chairperson reported that problems had arisen in connection with the transfer of the account to the new Treasurer but it was hoped that the delay would be resolved in the near future.

#### **4. Melcom (UK) Website**

Paul Auchterlonie reported that the departure of Ahmed Abu-Zayed, who acted as webmaster for MELCOM, from his post in Exeter resulted in problems with the administration and updating of the website. Improvements discussed and approved at the previous meeting had not, therefore, been carried out. Various suggestions were put forward to resolve this problem including the establishment of a 'Facebook' account. However, Mamtimyn Sunuodula offered to organise the hosting of the site in Durham and this offer was accepted. It would be necessary to copy and transfer the files to the new site as access to the existing site was no longer possible.

#### **5. Melcom International Conference**

The Chairperson reported on the 32nd Melcom International Conference which had been held in Cordova on 19-22nd April 2010. Many delegates had been unable to attend due to the disruption in flights at the time, as the result of the ash cloud crisis. Despite this unforeseen problem the conference went ahead and was a success, with some adjustments. The conference program was reorganized and reduced from 26 presentations to 15. Also, from the original 78 members who registered to participate only 38 were able to attend. The forthcoming conference will be held in Berlin 23-25th May 2011.

#### **6. Progress on digitisation projects**

##### **SOAS**

The SOAS half of the Yale-SOAS Islamic Manuscripts Gallery Project has been extended by six months to the end of February 2011. It has now digitised as images all but two of the six manuscripts, all of the manuscript catalogues and the Arabic to French and Persian to English dictionaries that it had selected. It is now embarking on OCR copying of some of the manuscript catalogues and at least one of the dictionaries, although the difficulties of processing texts with two different scripts will probably mean that the dictionary text will have to be re-keyed. The project has just recruited a part time member of staff to help with the OCR processing.

##### **Oxford/Cambridge Project (OCIMCO)**

Alastair Watson from the Oxford team reported on progress with the Oxford/Cambridge collaboration which is aiming at the creation of around 10,000 brief manuscript catalogue records from printed and handwritten descriptions. Considerable collaborative work has been done on the TEI template and records for the manuscripts are now being created by staff appointed specially for the task. There have been complex problems to resolve with accepted authorities for names and title entries which are still under discussion.

## **Al-Furqan**

The Al-Furqan Foundation aims to produce a printed catalogue of its manuscript collection at a later date but is also currently working on a methodology for an on-line catalogue of its collection. An existing schema using TEI mark-up for the description of manuscripts (ENRICH) has already been developed. A catalogue template for on-line access has also been produced in collaboration with the Oxford/Cambridge Project specialists, which will be used with the OXYGEN editor (an inputting tool for inserting the data in XML) for putting the back-catalogue on-line. Collaborative projects with the National Library of Cairo and the Süleymaniye Library in Istanbul is also in progress. Difficulties have also been found with establishing correct authorities for names.

### **7. Developments in member libraries.**

#### **Durham**

Mamtimyn Sunuodula reported that Durham had received the bequest of the library of the Persian scholar Ann Lambton consisting of 5,000 books, 30 manuscripts, also prints, reports and papers. Any duplicate copies will be donated to the University of St Andrews. JISC funding had been received to digitise the Library's Sudan collections. Working patterns have now changed and include more general library duties and well as specialist tasks.

#### **Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations**

This is still administered as two separate libraries. So far there was no replacement appointed for Stefan Seegar but the position had been advertised.

#### **Manchester**

Paul Tate reported that a collection review was currently taking place at Manchester. Changes had been made to the catalogue interface giving searches a more 'Amazon' style appearance. Cuts to the book-purchasing budget were likely.

#### **Leeds**

It was reported that cuts in funding for staff posts and to the acquisitions budget had resulted in the loss of 27 staff. New management schemes were under discussion and need to be in place by September/October this year. There had been cancellations to journals and series subscriptions which had affected arts subjects disproportionately.

#### **Al-Furqan**

There was a cataloguing project underway with the Süleimaniye Library in Istanbul.

#### **Index Islamicus**

Heather Bleaney reported that indexing work on the 'Index Islamicus' continued at the usual pace.

## **Geoffrey Roper – London**

Geoffrey Roper reported on his involvement with two new publications. He is Associate Editor, covering information on the Islamic World in: *The Oxford Companion to the Book*, edited by Michael F. Suarez and H.R. Woudhuysen. OUP, 2010.

Also sections in 'Printing in Europe & the Mediterranean - Theatralia, Musicalia & Orientalia: a Handbook of the History of Printing in Europe and the Mediterranean Countries, edited by Geoffrey Roper & Michael Hüttler. This is due to be published in 2014.

## **British Library**

There are some collection moves planned for some older collections; publications from 1900, previously available on open access, will be moved into storage at Boston Spa during 2010-11. Some collections from the store in Woolwich will also be moved to Boston Spa.

## **Oxford**

Book moves were taking place in the Bodleian in connection with the refurbishment of the New Bodleian building. The manuscript collections had already been moved. The new Bodleian building is scheduled to re-open as the Special Collections library after refurbishment is completed. The Oxford Oriental Faculty Library has undergone some reorganization of the layout to accommodate the oriental material from the New Bodleian during the time when its Reading Room is closed. It is also in the process of carrying out LC classification changes. Also, a full-time cataloguer has been appointed to work on adding 'hidden' collections that are not yet catalogued into the online database.

## **Exeter**

Paul Auchterlonie reported on the departure of Ahmed Abu-Zayed from his position at Exeter which he had held since 2001. Paul continues to work in a part-time position and reported on an on-going restructuring process at Exeter involving significant book moves and changes to the Library's function.

## **SOAS**

The Library is undergoing renovation as part of the Library Transformation Project which means the old entrance level E is closed. The large NME collection has been split over three floors and 20% of the collection has been relegated to off-site storage. Off-site material includes most Turkic and Iranian languages except Turkish and Persian, which is causing some problems to visitors who come to use those collections.

Librarians are working on an updated Collection Development Policy which involves a review of all the collections and conspectus coding for specific subjects or areas that

are taught or researched at SOAS. It is hoped this will help to develop research-level collections in specific areas.

The London Middle East Institute has set up an Iranian Studies Centre as a formally constituted centre in the LMEI (SOAS). They are currently in the process of electing a board, and we expect to work closely with the new Centre in the next academic session.

### **Cambridge**

Staff will be attending the TIMA Conference held in Cambridge in July and will attend and assist with the organisation of the TIMA Manuscripts Workshop in August. The Islamic Manuscript Project funded by JISC is now underway and has been reported on by Alastair Watson. Good progress is being made with this. 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 in photographic methodology still remain to be resolved before digitisation can go ahead. Further progress is being made on the descriptive brochure of the Islamic manuscripts collection. The text and images are now with the designer. It is hoped to go ahead with publication in October

### **St. Antony's College, Oxford, MEC Library**

The Middle East Centre library has just received a generous grant of £7,000 from the Soudavar Memorial Foundation to acquire books and periodicals relating to Iranian studies.

#### **8. Pearson lecture**

Provisional plans for the next Pearson lecture were raised but no specific names for speakers were put forward at this stage.

#### **9. Other business**

Jasmine Ansari reported on the departure of Humeyra Ceylan Izhar from her post at the Markfield Islamic Foundation to live abroad. The Committee commented with appreciation her work at the Foundation and wished her every success in the future.

#### **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting was scheduled for Monday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2011 at the BL.