

# MELCOM (U.K.)

## Minutes: 86th meeting

The 86th meeting of MELCOM (UK) took place in the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies at the University of Exeter, on Wednesday 29th June 2011 at 11.30 am.

The business meeting was followed at 2.30 pm by the 12<sup>th</sup> Pearson Lecture entitled "The novelist as political guide: Sun' Allah Ibrahim and the Egyptian revolution" which was given by Professor Paul Starkey (University of Durham).

### **Present:-**

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb	SOAS
Catherine Ansoorge	Cambridge
Paul Auchterlonie	Exeter
Lisa Bernasek	Islamic Studies Network
Peter Colvin	SOAS
Mastan Ebtehaj	St. Antony's, Oxford
Joed Elich	Brill
Yasmin Faghihi	Cambridge
Derek Hopwood	Oxford
Geoffrey Roper	London
Mamtimyn Sunuodula	Durham

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

Afifi al-Akiti	Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies
Jasmine Ansari	Markfield
Colin Baker	BL
Heather Bleaney	Index Islamicus
Karima Benaicha	al-Furqan Institute
Dinah Manisty	Bodleian
Maureen Pinder	Leeds
Ursula Sims-Williams	BL
Muhammad Isa Waley	BL

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

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a correct record of the proceedings.

### **3. Accounts**

The Secretary presented a brief updated financial report in the absence of the Treasurer. The signatories to the account had now been successfully changed and outstanding payments made. The total in the current account is £644.31 and in the reserve account £3006.01.

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

Mamtimyn Sunuodula, the site's webmaster updated the meeting on progress with the management of the new site which is now run on Durham University's server at <http://www.melcom.org.uk/>. It was suggested that the old website in Exeter should be closed down and efforts made to update the new site. It was suggested that the website design should be modernised and the content should include more current information on recent developments in member libraries and projects in progress.

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

The Chairperson reported on the 33rd Conference which had been held in the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, in May. Around 70 participants had attended and an impressive range of papers had been presented across the varied fields of interest including digitization projects and collections. It was reported that Melcom International had awarded 14 grants over the previous six years including one at the Berlin Conference. The newly-elected Melcom International Secretary and Treasurer are Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb (SOAS) and Farzaneh Zareie (BULAC). The website had been moved to Paris under the management of Sara Yontan. Jan Just Witkam had presented the newly published *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts*. The next Conference, in 2012, would be held in Paris and hosted by BULAC.

#### **6. MELCOM (UK) officers**

The Chairperson informed the meeting of her intention to step down from her position after three years due to the pressure of commitments in Oxford. She put forward the suggestion that Yasmin Faghihi (CUL) should succeed her in the Chair. This suggestion was seconded by Geoffrey Roper.

#### **7. Developments in member libraries and progress on digitisation projects**

##### **Index Islamicus**

Joed Elich reported on significant new technical developments at 'Index Islamicus' which involved the introduction of new software which would make the database fully bi-lingual. In the future, searching in both English and Arabic in the original script would be possible which would be a great step forward.

##### **SOAS**

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb reported that Phase 1 of the Library refurbishment plan has now been completed and collections which had been physically divided in former times had been brought back together on one floor. Collections stored off-site during the refurbishment would be returned to open access but it was not certain that this would be true for all stored collections. Some shelving space has been lost during the refurbishment process which meant that some weeding of the collections would be necessary. Book acquisition budgets had also suffered a decrease. Peter Colvin reported on the successful progress with the Yale/SOAS Digitisation Project which had been on-going for the last eighteen months. Now attention was re-focusing on adding

manuscript records for the SOAS collections into the 'Fihrist' catalogue developed by the Oxford/Cambridge team funded by JISC.

### **Durham**

The cataloguing of the Ann Lambton this bequest is now completed and the papers from her bequest are now being sorted and evaluated. More cataloguing work needs to be carried out to make these available for research purposes. A new management policy has been developed for the Middle East Documentation Unit at Durham.

### **Exeter**

Paul Auchterlonie reported that he would be replaced in his post after his retirement in July but that no advertisement for the position had yet appeared. The LIS-MIDDLE-EAST mailing list should be continued but would need a new manager. It was as yet undecided whether Ahmad Abu Zayed would return to his position in Exeter after his current period of unpaid leave. Further progress had been made with Kurdish cataloguing. Refurbishment of the Library would result in a reorganization of the Arabic collections, interfiling them with the general collections. As a result they would lose their separate identity. Paul is also working on a new edition of the 1704 work by Joseph Pitts *A true and faithful account of the religion and manners of the Mohammetans*, which will be published next year.

### **Cambridge**

Yasmin Faghihi organized a dissemination event on the completion of the OCIMCO project in March 2011 in Cambridge. Together with the Oxford/Cambridge team, the two other related JICS project teams (the SOAS/Yale and the Wellcome Trust) also gave presentations about their projects. The day ended with a scoping discussion on the subsequent 'Islamic Gateway' project and the projected move towards a UK based union catalogue of Islamic manuscripts. A further Workshop is planned for July at the Wellcome Institute.

The 'FIHRIST' catalogue has further progressed by receiving the commitment of the BL, the Royal Asiatic Society and Birmingham University to contribute their manuscript records while using adaptations of the TEI schema. Yasmin Faghihi and Alasdair Watson (Bodleian library), jointly presented reports on these projects at the MELCOM International Conference in Berlin.

The Library hosted the travelling exhibition *Lasting Impressions; seals from the Islamic World* from February to June 2011. The curators Annabel Gallop and Venetia Porter delivered a talk about the exhibition

Catherine Ansoorge presented a two-month exhibition in the Library *Cambridge in the Middle East* in February and March 2011 which presented information on the lives and work of a number of eminent Cambridge Middle Eastern scholars. The descriptive brochure of the Islamic manuscripts collection entitled *Faith and Fable* by Catherine Ansoorge has now been published. It is also available on-line.

A camera team from the ZDF (German TV) carried out a filming session relating to the life of J. L. Burckhardt, the Middle Eastern traveller) using examples of his books and manuscripts from the Library's collections.

### **Islamic Studies Network**

Dr Lisa Bernasek from the Higher Education Academy's Islamic Studies Network attended the meeting and provided an informative outline of its aims. She outlined its aims as a forum for those involved in teaching Islamic studies to share practice and resources. It is funded by JISC for three years, running workshops and publishing a magazine focussing on the teaching of Islamic Studies in the UK. She also outlined digitisation project and teaching and research resources.

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

The University libraries management system is in the process of migrating to a new system, Aleph, for which the whole system will be shut down from 10<sup>th</sup>- 18<sup>th</sup> July. The GOLIVE date is anticipated to be on the 18<sup>th</sup> July 2011.

### **8. Pearson lecture**

It was suggested that Professor Charles Melville (University of Cambridge) should be asked to deliver next year's Pearson lecture. This will take place during the next BRISMES Conference scheduled to take place at LSE in March 2012.

### **8. Date of next meeting**

As a result of the early scheduling of the next BRISMES Conference in March 2012 it was suggested that the next meeting, usually held in January, should be delayed until then. The second meeting of the year would then take place sometime in the late summer or autumn possibly in Cambridge.