

MELCOM (U.K.)

Minutes: 87th meeting

The 87th meeting of MELCOM (UK) took place in the London School of Economics on Monday 26th March 2012 at 11 am.

The business meeting was followed at 2 pm by the 13th Pearson Lecture entitled "The book as history in Iran" which was given by Professor Charles Melville (University of Cambridge).

Present:-

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb	SOAS
Jasmine Ansari	Markfield
Catherine Ansorge	Cambridge
Paul Auchterlonie	Exeter
Heather Bleaney	Index Islamicus
Peter Colvin	SOAS
Nidaa El Ghazal	Amnesty International
Gillian Evison	Bodleian
Yasmin Faghihi	Cambridge
Maria Luisa Langella	Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies
Kathy Lazenbatt	RAS
Dinah Manisty	Bodleian
Ursula Sims-Williams	BL
Nicolette van der Hoek	Brill

1. Apologies for absence:-

Afifi al-Akiti	Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies
Colin Baker	BL
Karima Benaicha	al-Furqan Institute
Debbie Cox	BL
Mastan Ebtehaj	St Antony's, Oxford
Maureen Pinder	Leeds
Mamtimyn Sunuodula	Durham
Paul Tate	Manchester
Alasdair Watson	Bodleian
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 total in the current account is £ 479.70 and in the reserve account £ 3007.13.

4. MELCOM (UK) Website

Mamtimyn Sunuodula, the site's webmaster, has suggested that the website should be redesigned as this would make the updating process simpler; also the existing site design is now looking outdated. He suggested the design should be modernised and the content updated to include more current information. He also suggested that, with the permission of the membership, he would work on this project over the summer period and bring more detailed suggestions to the next meeting. The members agreed that Mamtimyn should be given permission to progress in this way.

5. Melcom International Conference

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb, the Melcom International Secretary, reported on the progress in the planning for the 34th Conference to be held in Paris and hosted by BULAC in June. A wide variety of presentations are at present in the planning stage. MELCOM (UK) members expressed their sadness at the recent death of Dr. Lutz Wiederhold. He was the initiator and long standing director of the MENALIB Middle East Virtual Library who died on March 18. Members paid tribute to the significant contribution he had made to Middle Eastern librarianship over many years.

6. MELCOM (UK) officers

The Secretary informed the meeting of her intention to step down from her position after the next meeting and requested offers for a replacement. It was hoped names could be considered at the next meeting.

7. MELCOM Publications

The Secretary reported that the matter of the spare issues of MELCOM publications formerly stored at Joppa Books has now been resolved. Fifty copies of each publication had been transferred to Gerlach Books who will act as distributor in future and possibly make the publications available on-line. The remaining copies at Joppa had been disposed of freeing up shelf space there as requested.

8. Developments in member institutions

Amnesty International

Nidaa El Ghazal reported that there was a plan to decentralise the London headquarters and move to other premises which would provide a larger space for the library's collections. If funding permits there is a plan to put some publications on-line.

Oxford

The Bodleian had recently lend 63 of its oriental manuscripts for an exhibition entitled 'Love and Devotion; from Persian and Beyond' held at the State Library of Victoria in Australia. An exhibition catalogue is also being produced. The exhibition would return to Oxford in December and there would be an academic Conference held on the subject. All the manuscripts were digitised before travelling.

Arabic script names headings used in the 'Fihrist' catalogue had been contributed to VIAF. Emily Savage-Smith's catalogue on the medical manuscripts had been published. Progress is also being made in the digitisation of the catalogues of the Armenian and Georgian manuscripts collections. Records are being made using the same style template as the 'Fihrist' catalogue.

Index Islamicus

Heather Bleaney reported that the new technical developments at 'Index Islamicus', which involved the introduction of new software to make database searching fully bi-lingual, was still in progress. In the future, searching in both English and Arabic in the original script would be possible.

Markfield

Jasmine Ansari reported that the library at Markfield was continuing in its role to support teaching in Islamic studies. A new website had been produced and a newsletter published.

Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies

Maria Luisa Langella reported that she had now been in-post in the Library for a year. There was a policy initiative to expand the collections in the area of modern Islamic subjects. There is a plan in progress to move to a new building which will provide more open shelf space for books.

British Library

The Iran Foundation is funding a three-year project to support the on-line cataloguing and digitisation of the Persian manuscripts. There are already 1000 records ready to load into the 'Fihrist' catalogue. The digital library is growing and already contains one fully-digitalised Persian manuscript. A major exhibition is planned for the Autumn 2012 on the Moghuls which will display items form the Persian manuscript collection. There are also catalogue records for the Arabic manuscripts collection ready to upload into the 'Fihrist' catalogue.

SOAS

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb reported that 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. New acquisitions policies were concentrating increasingly on publications in English and European languages. There was also a

project to digitize some of the books collection – mainly English books. A new policy on e-book acquisition had been introduced allowing readers to suggest and order new titles. Peter Colvin has taken over the task on cataloguing the manuscripts collection into the 'Fihrist' catalogue funded by TIMA.

Royal Asiatic Society

Catalogue records for Arabic and Ottoman Turkish manuscripts had now been added to the 'Fihrist' catalogue. The project to catalogue the other manuscripts in the collection, funded by TIMA, has been taken over by Peter Colvin. Plans to damp-proof the basement of the building would disrupt the work of the Library during this year. Progress had been made with an on-line catalogue of the collection of paintings and drawings.

Exeter

Paul Auchterlonie reported that his post at Exeter had now been taken by Afzal Hasan. A coming reorganization of the Arabic collections, interfiling them with the general collections, would result in them losing their separate identity. The AWDU would move to the Old Library freeing up space to develop new student working spaces. Further work had been carried out on cataloguing the Kurdish periodicals. Paul's new edition of the 1704 work by Joseph Pitts "*A true and faithful account of the religion and manners of the Mohammedans*", has now been published.

Brill

Work was still continuing on the development of a new on-line platform for 'Index Islamicus'. An on-line collection of fully digitized Arabic manuscripts from Leiden University Library was now available.

Cambridge

The 'FIHRIST' catalogue has further progressed by receiving the commitment of the BL, the RAS and Birmingham University to contribute their manuscript records using adaptations of the TEI schema. Yasmin Faghihi and Alasdair Watson (Bodleian library), jointly presented a report on these projects at the MELCOM International Conference in Berlin. The Department contributed one showcase to the Library's major exhibition named 'Shelf Lives; four centuries of collectors and their books'. Items were contributed from the collection of George Lewis, a 16th century Christian missionary in India, who bequeathed a collection of Persian and Arabic manuscripts to the Library in 1727. The first collection of Islamic manuscripts has been added to the Cambridge Digital library at <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/> which was launched in December 2011. Initially, the images and metadata of 13 manuscripts have been displayed and more examples are to follow in the near future.

Manchester

The Library is undergoing changes in its organisation; the Department has undergone a review over the previous 7 months, and is now in the process of being restructured away from subject lines to a more 'functional model'. It is not clear to what extent this

will affect the current role of Middle Eastern Studies Librarian. The Library is successfully pushing ahead with the digitisation of the Arabic/Islamic Manuscript collection, some of which are now available. It is also planned to push ahead with contributing manuscript records to the 'FIHRIST' catalogue and there will be an assessment of how many records we can realistically be catalogued each month before applying for funding for a temporary Arabic/Persian cataloguer.

9. Pearson lecture

It was suggested that possible names for the next Pearson lecture should be held over until the next meeting when more is known about the scheduling of the next BRISMES Conference.

10. Date of next meeting

The second meeting of the year would take place on Monday December 10th probably at SOAS. The Chair suggested that perhaps the next meeting could be followed by a session of discussions or presentations on topics of current interest to members which could deal with subjects in more depth than was possible in the institutional reports.