

## MELCOM (U.K.)

### Minutes: 89th meeting

The 89th meeting of MELCOM (UK) took place in the Board Room of the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin Castle on Tuesday 25th June 2013 at 9.30 am.

The business meeting was followed at 12 noon by the 14<sup>th</sup> Pearson Lecture on Islamic collections in Dublin. The speakers were Dr Elaine Wright 'An introduction to the Islamic Collections of the Chester Beatty Library', Dr Jason McElligott 'The Islamic Collection of Archbishop Marsh's Library' and Alasdair Watson 'Archbishop Marsh's manuscript collection in the Bodleian'.

#### Present:

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb	SOAS
Catherine Ansoorge	Cambridge (Secretary)
Peter Colvin	SOAS and RAS
Yasmin Faghihi	Cambridge (Chair)
Waseem Farooq	Aga Khan University, London
Afzal Hasan	Exeter
Shah Hussain	Institute of Ismaili Studies, London
Mohammed Ibrahim	Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland, Dublin
Maria Luisa Langella	Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies
Geoffrey Roper	London
Ursula Sims-Williams	BL
Nur Sobers Khan	BL
Paul Tate	Manchester
Muhammad Isa Waley	BL
Alasdair Watson	Bodleian

#### 1. Apologies for absence:

Jasmine Ansari	Islamic Cultural Centre, London
Paul Auchterlonie	Exeter
Karima Benaicha	al-Furqan Institute
Heather Bleaney	Index Islamicus
Joed Elich	Brill
Dinah Manisty	Bodleian
Nicholas McBurney	Quaritch's
Maureen Pinder	Leeds
Mamtimyn Sunuodula	Durham

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

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

### **3. Accounts**

An updated financial report was circulated by the Chair acting as Treasurer. The total in the current account is £ 578.00 and in the reserve account £ 3008.99.

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

Mamtimyn Sunuodula had indicated that he had not had the opportunity to spend the time redesigning the web pages as he had hoped to do, but suggested these be moved to another server. Dinah Manisty and Dawn Vaux had agreed at the previous meeting to look into alternative possibilities but had not yet reported back their findings. It was hoped to make more progress with this before the next meeting.

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

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb (Melcom International Secretary), reported on the 35th Conference held in Moscow in May, hosted by the All-Russia State Library for Foreign Literature. The Conference had been well-attended with delegates from 14 countries, including Russian colleagues, and 21 papers were given. The next Conference is planned to take place in Istanbul.

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

Maria Luisa Langella (Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies) agreed to take on the role of Secretary from the next meeting and Waseem Farooq (Aga Khan University, London) agreed to take on the role of Treasurer. These changes were approved by the membership.

### **7. Developments in member institutions**

#### **Aga Khan University, London**

Waseem Farouq reported on the successful progress with the cataloguing backlog and now only 2,000 volumes were left to process out of a previous total of 10,000 volumes. The library has been amalgamated with the library of Institute for the Study of Islamic Civilisations which is now administered together as one Library using Innopac software as a management system. The two collections are to be managed in future by a single Head Librarian.

#### **Institute of Ismaili Studies, London**

Shah Hussain reported that the Head Librarian has retired and the post has been advertised. A manuscript catalogue of the Persian collection is scheduled for publication soon. The library is working towards an on-line management system and the digitisation of collections.

#### **Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies**

The collection coverage has been extended to include publications on Islam in Asia and in Europe. During the year 100 new books have been purchased and the total

stock is currently 13,000 vols. Some books are in storage and there is a move to a new building planned for 2014 with a 3M Security system to be installed. Donations had been received from the Oxford Oriental Institute; these are duplicate copies of Arabic, Persian and Urdu books.

### **Exeter University**

There has been a considerable expansion of the Kurdish collections and Omar Sheikmous, a former diplomat and academic has donated substantial items dealing with Kurdistan. Exeter is an active actor in the Open Access movement and Research Data management.

### **Islamic Cultural Centre of Ireland, Dublin**

Mohammed Ibrahim reported that the library had been established in Dublin in 1995 and had collected one of the largest collections of Arabic language material in Europe. The library also contained English language material which it is planned to expand further in future. The collections covered religious works including hadith and tafsir from Egypt, Syria and Lebanon but also works on Islamic economics. More books were being bought on a regular basis and it was planned to expand the collections in English. The library is a lending library, with a security system, and an on-line catalogue is planned for the future.

### **British Library**

Mohammed Isa Waley reported on the appointment of Catherine Eagleton as the new head of Asian Collections at the BL starting in September. The existing Middle Eastern staff consists of the two Arabic specialists – Colin Baker and Debbie Cox plus his own post (shared with Ursula Sims-Williams) for Persian. There is no Turkish curator at present. He mentioned the urgent need to update the metadata supporting the Mingana collection project at Birmingham which is at present without staffing support.

Ursula Sims-Williams reported on the establishment of a departmental blog which enables curators to write short pieces about items in the collection to raise awareness of its content. Further progress had been made with the digitisation of Persian manuscripts and so far 50 items had been fully digitised. Staff members are working on a methodology for making these accessible to the public. She also mentioned the usefulness of having a Twitter account to improve awareness of new initiatives within the library community.

Nur Sobers-Khan is working as a project curator creating catalogue records describing the Persian manuscripts. At the moment a three-year funded project is coming to an end but there is still a large number of manuscripts in the collection to be catalogued.

### **Royal Asiatic Society**

Peter Colvin reported his progress with the cataloguing of the RAS Arabic manuscripts collection into the 'Fihrist' catalogue. The Arabic collections are completed and the Ottoman collections almost complete. The LC transliteration system is used as the standard throughout. After this he intends to catalogue the Ottoman manuscripts at SOAS.

## **SOAS**

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb reported that many collections were still in storage after the recent refurbishment project and improved storage facilities are being sought. More e-books are being purchased and the Middle East collections have had a generous share of the purchasing budget. There is a new post of digital library officer being established to develop access to collections on-line with a plan to have a digital resources presence in place by the autumn of 2015.

## **Oxford: Bodleian Library**

The move into the newly refurbished Library building is scheduled soon and discussions are taking place as to which collections should be on open access in the Oriental Reading Room. There had been collaboration with Wadham College on its Persian manuscripts collection; catalogues of the collection had been donated and collaboration on new acquisitions is planned. Access to the Wadham collections had been opened up to all Oxford students of Persian. The Armenian and Georgian manuscript collections were being catalogued using the 'Fihrist' model and cataloguing of the Syriac manuscripts is also planned for the future. New name authorities are being contributed to the VIAF file.

## **Manchester**

Paul Tate reported that his post was no longer officially that of a subject specialist but that he was still able to spend most of his time on the development of the Middle East collections. The budget for purchasing new publications had been opened up to everyone in the team with no sum reserved specifically for the Middle Eastern collections. As a result it had been possible to spend around £50,000 on Middle Eastern material including Arabic literature and significant spending on on-line resources and journals. A digital listing of the Persian newspaper collections had been established. The transfer to a new library software management system – Ex-Libris – is planned for July.

**Geoffrey Roper** reported on the publication of the 3 volume *The History of the Book in the East* by the Ashgate Press, published June 2013, of which he had edited the volume on *The History of the Book in the Middle East*. He also reported on a plan to set up a portal providing access to digitised collections of early printed books.

## **Cambridge**

Further items from the Islamic manuscripts collection were added to the 'Cambridge Digital Library' during first part of the year, there are now over 30 complete manuscript texts in the digital collection. Digital images of all the early Qur`an fragments, from the collection of Professor E.H. Palmer, supported by funding from TIMA have also be added. A lecture by Dr Vrej Nersessian, to celebrate the publication of his catalogue of Armenian manuscripts in the UK (and including CUL) was given in May. A small manuscript display was also put together for the occasion in collaboration with the Ancient India and Iran Trust Library in Cambridge.

The budget for book purchase has remained the same as the previous year and the Department is continuing to purchase new publications in the vernacular languages we cover. The Library provided training courses in RDA cataloguing standards and at Easter RDA cataloguing was introduced for all new catalogue records, although old-style records are still accepted for copy cataloguing. Blogs about the Middle Eastern collections appear in the Library's 'Special Collections' blog.

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

Possible names put forward for the next Pearson lecture included Arnoud Vrolijk (Leiden University), Ulrich Marzolph (Göttingen), Robert Irwin (SOAS) or Peter Pormann (Royal College of Physicians). The 2014 BRISMES Conference will be held in Brighton.

#### **10. Date of next meeting**

The next meeting would be scheduled to take place on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2014 possibly at the Aga Khan University in London.