

MINUTES OF THE 93RD MELCOM UK MEETING

The 93rd meeting of MELCom UK was held on Tuesday 10th November 2015 at 10am at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies in Oxford.

The Pearson Memorial Lecture took place in the Middle East Centre Auditorium, Investcorp Building, St Antony's College, Oxford, at 2.30pm.

Present

Dominique Akhoun Schwarb, SOAS

Karima Benaicha, al-Furqan

Heather Bleaney, Index Islamicus

Peter Colvin, SOAS/Fihrist

Mastan Ebtehaj, Middle East Centre Library, St Antony's College, Oxford

Yasmin Faghihi, Cambridge University Library

Waseem Farooq, The Joint Library IIS-ISMC

Celeste Gianni, al-Furqan

Shah Hussain, The Joint Library IIS-ISMC

MariaLuisa Langella, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies

Daniel Lowe, British Library

Jenny Norton-Wright, TIMA

Asma Rezaei, Cambridge University Library

Paul Tate, Manchester University Library

Alasdair Watson, Bodleian Library

Lydia Wright, Bodleian Oriental Institute

(Lunch and Pearson lecture only)

Paul Auchterlonie, Exeter

Robert Irwin, speaker

1. Apologies

Colin Baker, British Library

Walid Ghali, The Joint Library IIS-ISMC

Andrew Marsham, Edinburgh University

Geoffrey Roper, independent Bibliographer

Ursula Sims-Williams, British Library

Shenxiao Tong, Edinburgh University

Muhammad Isa Waley, British Library

Ed Weech, Royal Asiatic Society

Armin Yavari, TIMA

2. Minutes of the previous meeting and matters arising.

Discussions were held on the possibility of collecting and uploading the minutes on the website in a different way, e.g. adding hyperlinks and indicating the email address of each reporting librarian underneath the report.

3. Treasurer's report.

Financial Report - January 2015

Current account

<u>Previous total</u>	£728.00
28.04.14	Marzholph -Pearson expenses -£156.97
16.06.14	BRISMES fees -£300.00
19.06.14	Funds transfer from Reserve acc. £100.00
27.06.14	Pearson Lecture expenses -£282.80
00.07.14	MELCOM member contribution £125.00
07.07.14	Pearson Fund £150.00
01.11.14	Domain name -£35.00
<u>Present total</u>	£328.23

Reserve account

Previous total £3,009.36

19.06.14 Fund transfer to Current acc. -£100.00

Total Interest £2.12

Present total £2,911.48

09.11.15 Total Interest £1.34

Present total £2,912.82

4. Website update.

The issue of how much storage space is available on the website was raised, as well as the possibility to add a search function to the Minutes as well as links to resources and databases. Other types of documents could also be added to the website, such as photos, slides and videos to make the website more pleasant to browse. Another development could be to audio and/or video recording of the Pearson Lectures which could then be uploaded on the website along with pictures of the events.

5. MELCOM (UK) officers.

6. Developments and project updates in member libraries.

Bodleian Libraries – Special Collections.

Alasdair Watson

- The Weston Library (where Special Collections are housed) has been open for just over a year now and is a great success with numbers for readers, consultations of manuscripts, and orders of printed reference material all increasing. September 2015 saw the highest figures on comparable record for that month in other years. In addition, Blackwell Hall with café, meeting place and exhibition spaces has become Oxford's newest social space.
- The Bodleian Winter Exhibition entitled 'Armenia: Masterpieces from an Enduring Culture' opened in the Weston Library in late October 2015. Over 100 items are on display, many of which are from the Bodleian Special Collections and have not previously been exhibited.

- In September 2015, two new Bahari visiting fellows took up their 9-month tenures in the Weston Library and the Centre for the Study of the Book: Dr. Nasrin Askari whose topic is 'Elite Folktales: An Exquisite Sixteenth-Century Illustrated Kitāb-i Dāstān in the Ouseley Collection of the Bodleian Libraries', will be producing an edition and translation this book of tales. Dr. Adeela Qureshi is studying the Bodleian's collections of Mughal paintings on the subject of The hunt as metaphor in Mughal painting (c.1556-1707).
- The Digital Mushaf Project, a pilot project funded by the Islamic Manuscript Association, is now online and available from <http://digitalmushaf.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>
- The first 60 catalogue entries for the newly acquired Simon Digby Oriental Collection are now online and available via Fihrist www.fihrist.org.uk
- Colleagues from Hebrew and Judaica and myself recently gave two 2-hour lectures on the 'Non-Western Book' to M.St students of English Literature at Oxford University and showed them examples from the manuscript and early printed book collections.
- Colleagues from the Oriental Institute and myself recently hosted a group of students from the London School of Social Science as part of a week-long course investigating Ottoman Archives. We introduced them to Ottoman resources in Oxford and displayed some of our Ottoman manuscript collections.

Bodleian Oriental Institute Library, Oxford

Lydia Wright

- Restructuring of the OIL: 2 leaving members of staff, including Mrs. Dawn Vaux (Head of Reader Services) and retiring member of staff Dr. Dinah Manisty (Middle Eastern and Islamic Subject Specialist and Oriental Institute Librarian-in-Charge). Dr. Dinah Manisty has been replaced by Ms. Lydia Wright as Subject Specialist and Mr. Lidio Ferrando is now the Senior Assistant Librarian at the OIL. The position of Librarian-in-Charge at OIL has not been replaced.
- Continuation of ICP records retro-conversion project and cataloguing of backlog of Arabic, Persian and Turkish books.
- Continuation of Arabic, Persian and Turkish journal survey to identify least used resources.

British Library

Muhammad Isa Waley

At our last meeting, in London, I reported that there were new British Library web pages covering the Arabic collections. Now I can report that since then we have added more pages on Arabic and others on Persian, Turkish, Hebrew, the Christian Orient and the Middle East in general. In addition, I am pleased to report that I have a new intern for Turkish and Turkic working with me for a period of six months. Michael Erdman is studying for his Ph.D. at

SOAS and has made a flying start in cataloguing those Ottoman books for which there were previously only handwritten British Museum-style records from the first half of the 20th century.

British Library

Daniel Lowe

* I replaced Debbie Cox as curator of Arabic collections in April 2015

* The British Library hosted the Shubbak literature festival with over 500 attendees. Elias Khouri was the keynote speaker. More details can be found on our departmental blog: <http://blogs.bl.uk/asian-and-african/2015/07/shubbak-literature-festival-at-the-british-library.html>

* Phase I of the BL's partnership project with the Qatar National Library digitising India Office Records and Arab scientific manuscripts was concluded, and a phase II runs until 2018. More details here: <https://www.bl.uk/press-releases/2015/january/british-library-and-qatar-foundation-extend-partnership-to-digitise-images-of-gulf-history>

Al-Furqan

Karima Benaicha and Celeste Gianni

Al-Furqan Library's activities & events:

- The library department hosted the visit of the attendees to the training programme "Ottoman and Archival Studies in the United Kingdom", organised by the London Centre for Social Studies (LCSS), on 6 August 2015.
- The library department was undertaking the inventory of al-Furqan physical library
- A volunteer was helping with the inventory & other library related tasks

The Centre for the Study of Islamic Manuscript organised:

- The Ninth Training Course on Editing, under the title "Editing Manuscripts on Jurisprudence, Legal Theory, Fatwā, and Momentous Events (al-nawāzil)", from 6th to 11th April 2015, held at Dar al-Hadith al-Hassania Institute in Rabat
- The Second Training Course on Codicology, under the title "Arabic Codicology: The Islamic Handwritten Tradition and its Reception in the El Escorial Collection"; from 20th until 24th of July 2015, at San Lorenzo de El Escorial, in Madrid – Spain
- The lecture: The Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadīm and the Transmission of Knowledge in the Islamic World, by Prof. Devin J. Stewart, 22nd April 2015 at al-Furqan
- The lecture: "The Critical Edition of Manuscripts between Text Verification and Commentary", by Dr Bashar Awwad Marouf; 9 April 2015, Rabat (Morocco)

The Centre for the Study of the Philosophy of Islamic Law organised:

- The 10th Training Course on the philosophy of Islamic law entitled “Objectives (Maqāṣid) of the Noble Quran” from 28-30 May 2015, Rabat – Morocco
- The 11th Training Course on the philosophy of Islamic law (Maqāṣid al-Sharī‘ah), under the title: “Applying the objectives of Islamic law (Maqāṣid) in Da‘wah work”, on 5-7 September 2015 (21-23 Dhul Qa‘dah 1436H), at the Islamic Cultural Centre in London.
- The lecture: "The Objectives of Fasting, Reflections on the Meaning" by Professor Heba Raouf Ezzat, 12 June 2015, London

Al-Furqan Publications 2015:

Late Arabic Scientific Commentaries: Their Role and their Originality: Works of Shams al-Dīn al-Khafri (1550 C.E./956 A.H.) - Arabic version, by George Saliba

The Critical Edition of Manuscripts between Text Verification and Commentary, by Bashar Awad Marouf

Editing manuscripts in the field of jurisprudence, legal theory, fatwas and momentous events (nawāzil) (Course proceedings)

The Corpus of al-Isfizārī in the Sciences of Weights and Mechanical Devices by Abū Ḥātim al-Muẓaffar ibn Ismā‘īl al-Isfizārī - English version, edited by Mohammed Abattouy and Salim al-Hassani

The Public Interest in the Term of the Purposes of Islamic Law: a Functional Vision, by Mohammad Kamal Imam

The legislative universal principles and the objectives of applying them: a case study based on al-Shāṭibī thought and his books: Al-Muwāfaqāt & al-I’tiṣām, by Ahmed Errazaki.

Index Islamicus

Heather Bleaney

1. Index Islamicus online contains more than 500 000 records now.
2. Online updates will be carried out monthly rather than quarterly, starting in 2016. This should provide a more up-to-date service.

ISMC- IIS

Waseem Farooq and Shah Hussain

The library is still working towards a one budget for the two unified libraries. Work is still going on with the merging of the two collections and de-duplicating. We had advertised for temporary cataloguers, and have recruited two on a short term basis. They will work on the Backlog cataloguing. We are exploring our options and looking for an open-source library management system and discovery service. Construction work is underway for a new

building near Kings Cross and St. Pancras. We hope that by 2018 re-housing should be completed

- We have started a subscription with WorldCat Discovery Service. Implementation completed recently
- Metadata Librarian advertised (previously advertised Systems Librarian)
- Archivist post advertised for working on the late Professor Arkoun's archive
- Backlog 80% almost complete (mostly Peter Avery Collection)
- Reclassification is almost 85% completed
- Deduplication completed
- Searching for e-book vendors; recently subscribed to EBSCO Arabic e-books collection

Manchester University Library

Paul Tate

Renaming of Middle Eastern Studies

Middle Eastern Studies has now officially changed its name to Arabic and Middle Eastern Studies. The change reflects the closure of Hebrew, Persian and Turkish degree programmes. Some staff members have been moved to other departments, namely History and Religions and Theology.

Resources

The Library is continuing to purchase non-Roman script material, mainly in Arabic and Persian. The Library has also been purchasing Arabic films as part of the Contemporary Arab Cinema Project. The project aims to place the University of Manchester at the centre for the study of Arabic Film and is run in collaboration with the American University of Cairo (AUC).

The budget for monograph purchases remains unchanged (open) across all disciplines. The total monograph spend for Middle Eastern Studies during 2014-15 was £24,373.00. There has been a reduction in the budget available for journals and one-off database purchases largely as a result of funds being diverted for new initiatives such as Books on Demand.

Iran Newspaper Digitisation Project

This project has been running for the past two years and involves digitising rare Iranian newspapers around three historical timeframes: August 1950 coup, 1979 revolution and 1990s Khatami era. So far we have digitised 23 newspaper runs corresponding to these eras. We are planning to launch the website in November. The majority of titles so far relate to the 1979 period but we hope to build up all these collections over time and open up the project for collaboration with other Libraries that have holdings in these eras.

Titles include: Ayandegan, Khak va Khun, Rastakhiz, Tehran Mosava, Kayhan and others.

School of Arts, Languages and Cultures Newsletter (SALC)

The Academic Engagement Librarians responsible for SALC have produced another end of year Newsletter reviewing the resources purchases last year and also providing information on a range of Library services.

Main Library Redevelopment 2016 - 2019

Building work will begin in summer 2016 and will consist of a phased approach over 3 years. This approach will allow the Library to remain open for the entire project. The Main Library Redevelopment, however, will mean that physical access to parts of the Library will be reduced. A significant stock weed will be carried out in order to facilitate the redevelopment and all books not borrowed on the last seven years will be moved to store. A total of 700,000 books and journals will remain on the open shelves throughout the redevelopment works.

Why redevelop?

The redevelopment aims to address the most common complaints from our current users around the general working environment and navigation. The redevelopment will improve the lighting, ventilation, heating and toilets and make better use of space by creating communities around subject areas, generating flexible study environments in the same space as relevant books and therefore improving navigation. The ground floor and entrance of the building will also be redesigned to include a new café and training space.

Further information about the Library Redevelopment, including a timeline and design concepts can be found on the Library website:

<http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/about/main-library-redevelopment/>

Middle East Centre Library, St Antony's College, Oxford

Mastan Ebtehaj

The MEC library moved in its newly built premises in July 2016, after nearly 3 years in the making. The building is designed by the renowned architect Zaha Hadid with amazing study area and huge storage space. The library since its opening in October 2016, has received lots of visitors worldwide, who wanted to take opportunity of visiting a Zaha Hadid's work.

The library closed over the summer, from July to end of September, to complete its collection move. In the new library, we have implemented RFID book security service, as well as electronic mobile shelving.

Furthermore, the library has received a huge number of book donations from its patrons. The largest was the library of Harold & Doreen Ingrams. This collection included a substantial number of early 19th century publications, as well as a collection of 19 manuscripts. Manuscripts are totally new to the library holdings, and all is very exciting. The manuscript collection comprises of 10 Qurans & book of prayers and 9 book of poems. The library is looking forward to more of similar donations.

<http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/research-centres/middle-east-centre/middle-east-centre-mec-library>

Near East/Middle East Dep. Cambridge University Library

Yasmin Faghihi

Updates from the UL

Off -site storage is being planned to be in operation from 2018.

Change in management structure, 3 major posts to be filled overseeing across existing areas.

Digital Initiatives

Research Collections

Academic Services

Changes in preservation and conservation policy and practice.

NE/ME Department

The portion of the Arabic Papyri of the Michaelides Collection of Fragments, which had been described by Prof Geoffrey Khan, but had remained unpublished, have been uploaded on the Cambridge Digital Library thanks to a fund from TIMA for creating the meta- data.

The al-Turath E-collection has been purchased from Eastview on the basis of a consortium agreement.

Workshop and visit to Leipzig University IT Department and University Library, creating TEI export function for Islamic Manuscript descriptions in ITEM (International Treasury of Islamic manuscripts) and brief meeting with the Arabic Papyri Team in preparation of sharing data of Michaelides collection.

Attendance at The Islamic Manuscript Association Lecture Series: Exploring the Codicological Evidence for Historical Repair, Recycling, and Re-Covering Phenomena in the Bindings of Islamic Manuscripts. RAS, London

A group of Iranian MPs visiting Cambridge as part of inter-parliamentary union visit from the IR of Iran organised by Westminster, Anglo-Iranian Friendship group – YF participation at lunch and MSS display and introduction to NE/ME collection at UL..

Conference paper “Fragments of history in transition - The Michaelides Collection in Cambridge Digital Library”, and participation at MELCOM International annual conference, Constantine, Algeria

Attendance of public lecture The ‘Fihrist’ of Ibn al-Nadeem

and the Transmission of Knowledge in the Islamic World

by Professor Devin Stewart Professor of Arabic and Islamic Studies at Emory University, USA

Visit by Mor Ivanios Kuriakose bishop of the Knanaya Community in Kerala (India) and an accompanying delegation to view the Syriac Bible, known as the Buchanan Bible.

Organisation and preparation of the Workshop “Palaeography of Early Qur'anic Scripts”, a 3 days’ workshop at UL, Cambridge (tutored by Prof. Deroche, Ecole Pratique, Paris).

Delivered paper “The Qur’an in Digital Humanities” at the one day Symposium adjacent to the Workshop “Palaeography of Early Qur'anic Scripts” , UL

Supporting the FAMES team in the organisation of the annual Cambridge Qur`an Seminar, a one day conference at Magdalene College.

Visit to Turkmenistan, Ashkhabad. Meeting with the head of the Centre for Culture, art and Education. Visit of the National Library and meeting with Head Librarian. Presentation on current working methods and digitization projects at UL, to Library staff. – by invitation

Meeting with team of John Rylands Research Centre, Manchester on collaborations for projects using TEI. Creation of a bibliographical data in TEI for Persian Manuscripts to be harvested from FIHRIST. Workshop on TEI with Manchester Hebrew Manuscript Project Team, Manchester- by invitation

Presentation “vertiginous view of the Cosmos – in Cambridge Digital Library” at a symposium for the opening of the exhibition “Image makers-image takers”- Cancer research Unit – Addenbroke Hospital, Cambridge

<https://imagemakersimagetakers2015.wordpress.com/2015/07/14/image-makers-image-takers-preliminary-speakers/>

Fihrist news

Fihrist Board meeting, Bodleain, Oxford.

No funding/no development work

Addition of Manchester and Birmingham records

Addition of records from Trinity Dublin

Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OCIS)

MariaLuisa Langella

OCIS staff have been in the new library for a year now after the move from George Street which took place in August 2014. The new library has about 40 seats. Other OCIS departments have started moving in since last summer. The absence of Fellows in the new building is felt as their presence on site will attract more students. There are talks about drafting a proper acquisition policy for the library as this has been missing for a long time, and possibly to extend opening hours during Term (currently 9 to 5 Mon to Fri), but this will depend on funds and staff availability. The Centre will function like a college, there will be

catering and student/scholars accommodation and we are hoping this will happen throughout the current academic year.

With the opening of the new library, new personnel has been recruited, two part-time library assistants, one working in the morning and the other in the afternoon, and more recently one more library assistant working a total of one day per week. For the time being, there are two fully-trained cataloguers in the library, which means more help in cataloguing the backlog of books that were stored in the previous library premises. Since last report, progress has been made on the donation from Dr Fogg, OCIS Fellow in Islam in South East Asia of about 40 books in Burmese on Islam in Burma. Thanks to the help of a Burmese Oxford researcher who helped identify the metadata for the books, minimal level records are now available on SOLO for all these books. There may be more Burmese books which will be purchased in the coming months and hopefully further help will be provided in cataloguing them and upgrading the minimal level records.

Some areas of the collection which had been miscatalogued have been recatalogued. This work has included replacing the fading handwritten labels on the books with new printed ones.

More broadly on the recent activities at the OCIS: a series of seminars is held in Michaelmas Term 2015 on *Transmission of learning in Muslim societies* (Wednesdays at 5pm in George Street). These afternoon seminars are open to the public and they are usually quite popular.

Royal Asiatic Society (RAS)

Ed Weech

1. The three RAS manuscripts which were on long-term loan at the British Library have been transferred to Cambridge University Library on long-term loan. They are the Shahnamah (RAS MS 239) commissioned for the Timurid prince Muhammad Juki in Herat in 1445, as well as the Kitab-i Mathnawiyat-i Zafar Khan (RAS MS 310) and the Gulistan ('Rose Garden') of the Persian poet Sa'di (RAS MS 258).
2. Most of the records for our Arabic manuscripts have now been imported from Fihrist into our own online catalogue as well.
3. Our Archivist has been in post for a year now and has made excellent progress cataloguing and arranging different parts of our archives. She recently has been sorting and arranging the Charles Storey papers here in preparation for cataloguing.
4. We recently added our library holdings to Copac and continue to make progress cataloguing our printed books. As additional books are catalogued they too will be added to Copac in due course.
5. We have launched a new website and now have an active blog and social media presence. Colleagues may be interested in following some of the posts on our events and collections and we are grateful for any feedback.

School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb

"1. The implementation of the new LMS KUALI-OLE and the new public catalogue interface (VuFind) has overshadowed every single activity in the Library since April 2015, as it has altered - very often for the worst- nearly every single processes and workflows in the Library from the selection, cataloguing, acquisition of items to their circulation as well as the maintenance of users records, to name a few.

2. Our Digital Library Portal has had a soft launch (see soas.digital.ac.uk) but not an official one and has been hobbling along, independently from the new LMS, since it's based on a different system (Sobek CM).

3. A new head of Research Services in the Library, Christine Wise, has been recruited. She is managing four services in the Library (Teaching and Research Services, Acquisitions and Bibliographic Services, the Archives and Special Collections Services and the Digital Library Services) and there is hope that this will lead a more integrated approach to the development of our collections and the enhancement of their visibility. More attention is being given to our manuscripts and rare books collections.

4. In August 2015, the London Centre for Social Studies was offering its first Ottoman and Archival Studies training programme, which took place in London and Oxford, and included a visit to SOAS Archives on 5th August. A description of their visit at SOAS is available on the SOAS Archives blog at: <https://blogs.soas.ac.uk/archives/2015/09/25/ottoman-sources-teaching-session/>

5. Discussions are planned between the Subject Librarian for the Middle East and Central Asia (Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb), the SOAS Acting Head of Archives (Joanna Anthony) and Muhammad Isa Waley at BL to bring out a series of co-operated seminars/workshops, engaging SOAS academics who would be interested to participate, around the theme of working with Middle Eastern manuscripts from various perspectives (the contents of those manuscripts as primary sources for research but also their codicological and paleographical features).

6. Spurred by a new wave of interest for the literature of North Africa among SOAS PhD candidates and researchers, I have revived a programme of acquisition of Arabic books from and about that region, via the vendor Dar al-Mahjar (based in Cambridge, MA). Unfortunately we are encountering much difficulties in sourcing books from Libya due to the volatile political situation there."

School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)/Fihrist

Peter Colvin

I am now just finishing putting in the last entries for SOAS manuscripts into Fihrist, and following on from the nine SOAS Pushto manuscripts, I have been entering all the Pushto manuscripts in the UK and Ireland, based on the union catalogue of D.N. MacKenzie.

The Islamic Manuscript Association (TIMA)

Jenny Norton-wright

Summary of activities in the UK/online since last MELCOM-UK meeting (21 January 2015)

Recent activities

Journal of Islamic Manuscripts

Volume 6, issue 1 was published in spring 2015

Volume 6, issue 2-3 has just been published and is about to be distributed by Brill to Association members. This double issue presents, among other papers, selected proceedings from the conference 'Codicology and History of the Book in Arabic Script' which took place in Madrid in May 2010, and was guest-edited by Francois Deroche, Nuria Martinez de Castilla Munoz, and Francis Richard.

Resources in Translation

Publication of an Arabic translation of Basic Preservation, from the BL Collection Care Series. Copies have been sent to the UK legal deposit libraries, and the booklet can also be accessed as a [download](#) from the Association's website. Persian and Turkish translations of the same title are now in an advanced state of production.

Courses, symposia and lectures

Course: *Traditions of Papermaking in the Islamic World* (23-27 March 2015, The British Library, London). With an associated public lecture on 24 March: *Covering and Re-Covering: Exploring the Codicological Evidence for Historical Repair, Recycling, and Re-Covering Phenomena in the Bindings of Islamic Manuscripts*, given by Evyn Kropf, Librarian of Near Eastern and Religious Studies and Curator of the Islamic Manuscript Collection, University of Michigan, USA.

Course: *The Codicology and Palaeography of Early Qur'an Manuscripts* (11-13 May, 2015, University of Cambridge, Cambridge). With an associated symposium on 14 May.

Symposium: *Traces of the Hand from Africa to Asia: A Symposium on the Palaeography of Arabic-Script Languages* (24 August 2015, King's College London, Strand Campus, London). Held in conjunction with the Association's AGM.

Course: *Introduction to Islamic Codicology* (7-11 September 2015, University of Cambridge, Cambridge). With an associated public lecture on 10 September: *Deciphering Medieval Libraries of the Islamic World*, given by Professor Francois Déroche.

Islamic Manuscript Collections in Conflict Zones: Safeguarding Written Heritage (5–7 October 2015, Royal United Services Institute, London). With an associated public panel discussion entitled *From the Balkan Wars to ISIS: The Challenge of Safeguarding Manuscripts in Conflict Zones* (Chatham House, London, 6 October).

Governance

Yasmin Faghihi was elected as a member of the Association's board of directors at the AGM in August 2015. She replaced Prof Jan Just Witkam who stood down after completing his maximum term of service. David Hirsch was also re-elected as a board member.

Ongoing projects

Resources in translation

The Association is working to translate further selected titles from the BL's Collection Care Series, in addition to other key texts published by external organisations.

International Treasury of Islamic Manuscripts (ITIM)

This project seeks to provide a free, secure, user-friendly, bilingual (Arabic and English) online manuscript cataloguing platform. It can be used by any institutional or individual collection-holder, anywhere in the world, and is particularly useful for collections which may lack resources to develop or purchase in-house cataloguing and image presentation software. It has been developed to accommodate both best practice and minimum practice in cataloguing manuscripts, and includes fields for codicological features. It is suitable for use as a primary cataloguing tool, as well as for institutions with previously-catalogued collections who desire to present this data online. Some data storage for images will be provided, and a formal user agreement/license guarantees the rights to and ownership of all images and cataloguing data to remain with the contributor. This project is still under development, but had a 'soft launch' at last year's Association conference, and was recently been presented by David Hirsch and Stefanie Brinkmann at the MELCOM International conference. ITIM is a rather different tool from Fihrist, though not incompatible with it from a user's perspective. The database has been tested and is ready to be used, although certain aspects of its presentation and associated information still need to be developed. Interested persons are encouraged to contact the Association directly for more information.

Upcoming events (in the UK):

Lecture

[*Reading Books By Their Covers: What 10,000 Mauritanian Manuscripts Tell Us About 350 Years of an Islamic Culture*](#). A lecture by Charles Stewart, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a Visiting Scholar at Northwestern University's Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa.

(Tuesday, 17 November, 5pm, Nihon Room, Pembroke College Cambridge)

Biennial Conference

The [Eleventh Islamic Manuscript Conference: Sufism and Islamic Manuscript Culture](#) will take place from 13 to 15 September 2016, Magdalene College, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK. The Call for Papers has been issued, and the deadline for submissions is 23 November

Grant Schemes

The submission deadline for the next funding round of the Association's [Annual Grant Scheme](#), open to all members who have paid the membership fee for the current year, is 1 February 2016. Applications to the [Collection Care and Emergency Response](#) grant scheme (CCER) are accepted at any time. As previous, all paid-up members are eligible, and in the case of CCER members may also apply on behalf of any other collection or institution worldwide, which does not itself need to be an Association member.

MELCom International

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb

The 37th annual conference of MELCom International took place from 28 to 30 April 2015 at the Université Constantine 2 – Abdelhamid Mehri in Constantine, Algeria. The local convenors were Nadjia Gamouh and Azzedine Bouderbane, of the Institute of Library Sciences at the Université Constantine 2. The meeting was followed by an excursion in the ancient Roman town of Timgad. President Dr Helga Rebhan, who could not attend for imperative personal reasons, was graciously represented by Dr Geoffrey Roper (Independent bibliographer, Ex-Editor of the *Index Islamicus* and longest standing member of the MELCom International present). The conference saw 49 attendees coming from 14 countries of work, including Egypt, Finland, Germany, France, Italy, Russia and the UK, but also Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia. The conference was held in the main amphitheatre of the University Constantine 2 Abdelhamid Mehri and was hosted by the staff and students of the Institute of Librarianship and the NTIRDN Centre of Research. 21 papers were presented on the following themes:

- Algerian libraries & collections
- Cataloguing policies and practices
- Manuscripts, rare books and documents: describing, cataloguing, preserving them
- Manuscripts cataloguing & digitization projects
- Manuscripts and rare documents in the Balkans
- Press and libraries
- Protecting and diffusing Middle East Collections

Farzaneh Zareie, the Treasurer of MI, who could not attend for administrative reasons, was graciously represented by Andreas Drechsler (from the Bamberg University Library in Germany). Andreas reported on the financial standing of the association. The balance brought forward on the MELCom International account on 28th May was € 7032,27.

Some of the discussions touched upon a series of propositions to develop the cooperation between the two main organisations of librarians for the Middle East, namely the MELA (based in the USA) and the MELCom International (based in Europe).

Announcements on MELCom International are posted on the Committee's website www.melcominternational.org

Information on annual conferences as well as discussions on Middle East Librarianship and scholarship can be followed by subscribing to the group list "lis-middle-east" on Jiscmail.

The programme of the conference included a tour of the Constantine famous bridges and gorges, a guided visit of the Palace of the Ahmed Bey in Constantine's Old City, and a visit of the Library collections of the University of the Islamic Sciences Emir Abdelkader in Constantine. The three-day conference was followed by an excursion in the ancient and exceptionally preserved Roman town of Timgad, in the Aurès Mountains at 125 km south of Constantine.

The 38th annual conference of MELCom International will take place over three days, from Monday 30th May 2016 to Wednesday 1st June 2016 (inclusive), at the Leiden University Library (<http://www.library.leiden.edu/>) in The Netherlands.

The local convenors are Birte Kristiansen and Arnoud Vrolijk. The programme will include a historical tour of Leiden on Thursday 2nd June 2016.

As previously, the conference sessions will be dedicated to the following topics:

- Librarianship, collection development and acquisition policies
- Cataloguing policies and practices
- Catalogues and bibliographies
- Electronic resources and digitisation projects
- Digital humanities & Middle Eastern collections
- Cooperation projects between libraries holding Middle Eastern collections
- History of libraries, ownership and readership
- Manuscripts, rare books and documents
- Current issues of information science in Middle East area studies ...and any other aspect within our fields of interest.

7. Pearson Memorial lecture.

Discussion were led with Brismes members and MELCOM UK. A variety of solutions to the question were laid out, all of which excluded free hosting of the Pearson Lecture and the MELCOM AGM.

MELCom members were asked to vote by email whether they wanted to pursue cooperation with BRISMES under the new rules or split from it. Out of 16 votes, 15 voted against continuing the cooperation with BRISMES for the near future. The Pearson Lecture will from now on be held as an independent public lecture.

8. Any other business.

9. Date and place of next meeting.

Tuesday 13 December 2016 at the Weston Library, Oxford.

Photos of Pearson Lecture:

