

Minutes of the 96th MELCom UK Meeting

The 96th meeting of MELCom UK was hosted by the Institute of Ismaili Studies and Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations' Library, at 210 Euston Road, London NW1 2DA, on Wednesday 31st January 2018 at 2.30 pm (tea/coffee from 2pm).

2.30 Business meeting

1. Welcome

Present:

Yasmin Faghihi (Chair), Cambridge University Library, Cambridge
MariaLuisa Langella (Secretary), Middle East Centre Library, Oxford
Waseem Farooq (Treasurer), ISMC-IIS Joint Library, London
Lydia Wright (Website), Bodleian Library, Oxford
Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb, SOAS University of London, London
Karima Benaicha & Celeste Gianni, Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, London
Daniel Lowe & Michael Erdman, British Library, London
Shah Hussein, ISMC-IIS Joint Library, London

2. Apologies for absence

Peter Colvin, SOAS University of London /Fihrist, London
Ursula Sims-Williams, British Library, London

3. Minutes of the last meeting

Two corrections were made. Minutes were then approved and have been uploaded to the website.

4. Treasurer's Report

MELCOM (UK)
Financial Report - January 2018

Current account

	Previous total		£559.23
07.07.17	Pearson Fund	£150.00	
Expenses paid		-£6,048.99	
Funds raised		£2,700.00	
	Present total		£2,403.52

Reserve account

	Previous total		£2,914.33
30.11.16	Total Interest	£0.47	
	Present total		£2,914.80

5. MELCOM UK secretary position

MariaLuisa Langella announced that she would be stepping down as MELCOM UK secretary since she has taken up the position of [MELCom International](#) secretary. The role of MELCOM UK secretary was now open and Lydia Wright agreed to take it on for the time being.

6. Reports received from institutions and other Library groups

Report from SOAS University of London

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb

I. Structure

We are still awaiting for the position of Director of the Library to be advertised.

In the meanwhile, the academic restructuring has been completed and implemented. SOAS has now abandoned its faculty structure and reformed departments around "Schools". The departments for Africa, Linguistics, Middle East, South Asia and South East Asia have been merged into the new *School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics* (note that a different *School of East Asian Languages and Cultures* has been set up, which covers China, Inner Asia, Japan and Korea departments). The other Schools are: *School of Arts, School of History/Religions/Philosophy, School of Interdisciplinary Studies, School of Law, and School of Politics & International Studies*.

Restructuring of the professional services are underway now. Draft proposals are being discussed and consulted upon.

The restructuring of the Library however would not happen before August 2018 though, as management is expecting the new Director of the Library to take the lead of that restructuring. The new academic structure will no doubt heavily influence the reshaping of the structure of the Library, as the mirror-image model has now been broken.

II. Collection management

Focus has been on streamlining our collections by clearing backlogs of donations and decreasing footprint of our collections by stepping up our weeding programme.

a. Spatial change

Our current offsite storage providers have given us notice to remove our stock by May 2018. Process of selecting a new offsite storage has gone to tender and we are now reviewing potential providers for removal and storage services.

Librarians are fully engaged in mapping their offsite holdings in a bid to reduce the footprint of that stock and reduce future storage costs. Hence, many donations backlogs that were sent to offsite, will now have to be sent back and processed.

b. Acquisitions

We have moved from a policy of "*Electronic First*" to "*Electronic Only*" now, in as much as feasible. In my view, this E-only policy is problematic, as for one many resources (in vernacular languages especially, and/or from smaller publishers and university presses) are not yet available in electronic format, and secondly, a high proportion of the available ebooks are not DRM free (see Dawsonera, Ebook central, etc.), which put them out of reach of our external users, as only SOAS students and staff can access them. This compromises our mission as one of the UK national research libraries to provide access to all to our specialist collections.

c. Special collections

We are reviewing our manuscripts holdings and trying to bring in-house (searchable on our OPAC) the data currently stored in *Fihrist*.

Report from Bodleian Oriental Institute Library

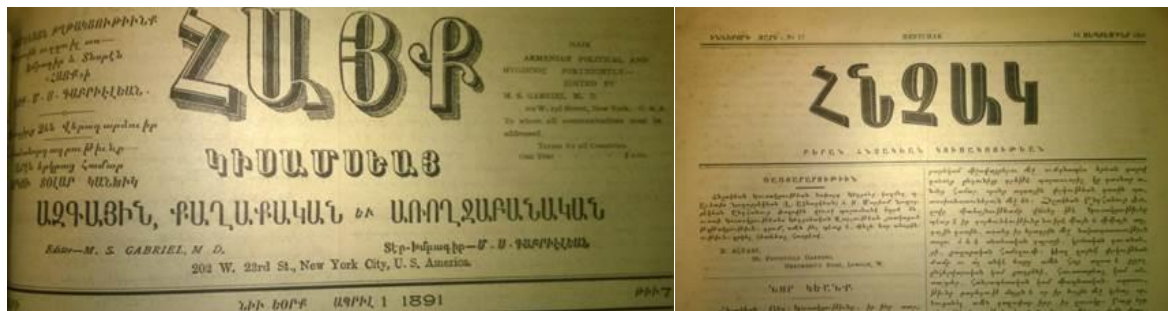
Lydia Wright

MELibOx -- Our meeting of Oxford ME Librarians which we set up just over a year ago, is still going strong, meeting termly to discuss relevant issues.

Bodleian Oriental Institute Library -- There has been a restructuring within the Library which has meant that our technical services activities have moved offsite. This has meant that the library has had to adjust to a number of changes recently including being slightly shorter staffed on site. Our opening hours have also been changing, and we are currently trialling shorter vacation opening hours of 9-5 and closing on Saturdays. Term time hours have remained the same 9-7 and Saturdays 11-5.

Persian & Georgian Cataloguing -- We have started two projects this year to catalogue the Persian and Georgian Bodleian material which is currently only findable via our card catalogues. The card catalogues for these collections have been scanned and colleagues will be working from the scans to catalogue the material onto our library management system. We will be downloading existing OCLC records but newly created records won't be exported to OCLC but kept as Oxford local records to be searchable via our own institution's online catalogue only. This is because the material will have been catalogued from the card catalogues without having been examined.

Armenian Newspaper Cataloguing -- I am just coming to the end of a project to catalogue a wonderful collection of Armenian newspapers which had been donated to the Bodleian several decades ago but had not been added to our holdings until now. This collection comprises newspapers in the Armenian language from across the world from between the 19th and 20th centuries. Many of them are from the Middle East (the largest collections being from Tehran, with others from Lebanon and Yerevan) and several also from Europe and the United States including one from New York 1891 and London's Shephard's Bush from 1896!



These newspapers are excellent primary sources documenting the Armenian diaspora worldwide but could also be the basis of a focused study on a particular region such as Tehran in the 1950's for which we have a good run of several titles. I will soon be uploading a list of this collection to the Bodleian's Middle East and Islamic Studies Libguides page (<https://libguides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/MiddleEast>) so that they are easier to find.

E-resources -- Oxford has compiled a list of all potential e-resources not subscribed to by the Bodleian to see what is missing from our collections. It could be useful to share a similar list of ME e-resources amongst MELCom UK members to keep track of what e-resources exist in our field, trials and feedback.

New Professorships -- The Faculty of Oriental Studies has had two new posts created, one for Ottoman History and the other for Sasanian Studies, this will result in an increased purchase of material in these subject areas.

Report from MEC Library, Oxford
MariaLuisa Langella

The MEC library has just begun its 3rd year in its new premises (Investcorp building). The number of readers has constantly increased since the move and it now includes some 300 readers.

Acquisitions

Many new acquisitions have been made thanks to the support of and in coordination with the Bodleian Libraries. In addition to resources for teaching purposes, the MEC library has acquired over 500 new Titles in English, French and other European languages, and about 300 new books in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish on subjects covering all aspects of the history and politics of the Middle East, but also international relations, gender studies, media and popular cultures of the region.

Cataloguing

We have started cataloguing our backlog of donations. These include several hundreds of books received over the past years in Western languages but also in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. Ms Wassilena Sekulova of the Bodleian Library has been assisting with this project one day per week.

Events

On 15 and 16 September 2017, the MEC celebrated its 60th anniversary. On this occasion, about 150 alumni of the Centre gathered to take part in a weekend of lectures and celebration. The MEC Library organised an exhibition entitled *Gifted Treasures of the MEC Library*, in which some 20 donated books and journals were displayed, some featuring the signature of the author or donor, ranging from early 17th century books to contemporary publications. A manuscript of the Qur'an probably made in Yemen was also displayed. On the same occasion, the MEC library also organised a book sale event in which over 1000 duplicate donated books were displayed. The event was quite successful with over 100 items being sold. The remaining books are still available for sale and a list of these can be browsed on the library's website.



7. Website/Mailing List

MELCom Website Report

The MELCom UK website has been for the past few years hosted by Oxford University, however since the University is migrating to a new CMS in Summer 2018, we have been asked that the MELCom UK website be transferred to a new host by that date.

Since we received notification of this, we have paid for the domain name registration for www.melcom.org.uk and its renewal for 9 years (£54 via Gandi.net), but we still need to sign up to a new website host which will undoubtedly involve certain monthly costs.

Suggested alternative hosting platforms that have been recommended to date have been wix.com, wordpress.com or commercial hosts such as Vidahost.

wix.com is apparently very easy to use, mobile friendly and allows for the webmaster to utilize Google Analytics, however if you want to link an existing domain it does cost about £ 3.88/month (£46.56 a year) or so. <http://www.wix.com/upgrade/premium-plans>

Wordpress would cost around £2.50 a month to connect to an existing domain and to make sure there are no unwanted adds...etc. There are also questions around storage capacity and bandwidth. <https://wordpress.com/pricing/>

Vidahost could cost around £71.81 for 2 years, however it could cost several hundred pounds to redesign the website in the first place. <https://www.vidahost.com/web-hosting>

MELCom members appeared happy to try wix.com as the new hosting platform and agreed with the cost involved.

8. MELCOM International

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb gave a report on MELCom International with MariaLuisa Langella making the announcement for the 2018 conference:

The 40th conference of MELCom International will be hosted by the [Library and Information Centre of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences](#) in Budapest, from the 19th through the 21st of June (excursion on the 22nd of June). Our local organiser is Dr. Kinga Dévényi.

9. Next Pearson Memorial Lecture

There was some discussion as to when and where the next MELCom meeting and Pearson Memorial Lecture would take place with al-Furqan offering to host the next meeting.

10. Round Table on acquisition

Discussion postponed due to lack of time.

The group heard a presentation by the Aga Khan University on their bibliographic database project "[Muslim Civilisations Abstracts Project](#)" which aims to provide a database of short book reviews (abstracts) about works concerning Muslim civilisations.

In the afternoon (6-8pm), we attended the roundtable on *The Landscape of Arab Publications: Challenges and Opportunities* at the Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations.