

## Minutes of the 97<sup>th</sup> MELCOM UK Meeting

The 97<sup>th</sup> meeting of MELCOM UK was hosted by Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, at 22A Old Court Place, London, W8 4PL<sub>2</sub> on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018, 12-5pm.

### **Present:**

Yasmin Faghihi (Chair)	Cambridge University Library, Cambridge
Lydia Wright (Acting Secretary & Website)	Bodleian Library, Oxford
Waseem Farooq (Treasurer)	ISMC-IIS Joint Library, London
Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb	SOAS University of London, London
Rihana Suliman	British Library (Endangered Archive Programme), London
Celeste Gianni	Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, London
Karima Benaicha	Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, London

Welcome to Rihana Suliman to her first Melcom UK meeting.

### **1. Apologies for absence**

Paul Tate	University of Manchester Library
MariaLusia Langella	Middle East Centre Library, Oxford
Mohammad Emami	Ferdowsi Library, Oxford
Daniel Lowe	British Library, London
Colin F Baker	British Library, London
Michael Erdman	British Library, London
Susanne Jennings	Woolf Institute, Cambridge
Edward Weech	Royal Asiatic Society, London

### **2. Minutes of the last meeting**

Lydia requested members send missing library or institutional reports to her so she could add these to the minutes of the last meeting.

An addition to the previous minutes was suggested and corrections made. Minutes were then approved and have been uploaded to the website.

### **3. Accounts**

#### **Financial Report - (Waseem Farooq)**

<b>Current account</b>		
	<b>Previous total</b>	<b>£2,403.52</b>

09.07.18	Pearson Fund	£150.00	
31.08.18	Website, Gandhi via Lydia	-£50.40	
	<b>Present total</b>		<b>£2,503.12</b>
<b>Reserve account</b>			
	<b>Previous total</b>		<b>£2,914.80</b>
19.11.18	Total Interest	£1.58	
	<b>Present total</b>		<b>£2,916.38</b>

Yasmin Faghihi raised the question of how to put our accumulated funds to best use. One idea is to use it for lecture invitations.

#### 4. Website/Mailing List

##### Melcom Website report (Lydia Wright)

Since our last Melcom UK meeting the Melcom website has been moved off the University of Oxford's servers onto a Wordpress site by recommendation of Bodleian IT Services. The site can be accessed at the usual address: <http://www.melcom.org.uk/> The website currently looks very much the same as the previous one, using a very simple template. The website needs updating both in terms of design and content; for this Lydia suggested creating a working group to share the work amongst us. Now that the site has been transferred to its new location Lydia is hoping to hand over the responsibility for the website's upkeep to somebody else and would welcome volunteers.

Lydia would like to create a site akin to that of the South East Asia Library group (<http://www.sealg.org/index.html>), but for this input and help from others would be needed including deciding what content to exclude and include.

We have paid for the year's subscription which came to £50.40 for 1 year (£4.20/month).

The idea of creating a working group to improve the website was discussed but no conclusions reached. There was consensus that the website needs updating and that we would welcome ideas as to how to make the website more visible and useful to the Committee.

#### 5. Any Other Business

Celeste Gianni suggested having a page on the website dedicated to duplicates and exchanges. This prompted a discussion about duplicates and the issues around the lack of budget for postage, logistical problems around exchanging books and not having the time to prepare lists of duplicates in the first place. Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb reported that at SOAS English language duplicate books are sent to booksellers but vernacular language duplicate books do not sell and end up being pulped because there is no one to catalogue them. Celeste suggested submitting a proposal for a project to tackle the issue of duplicates at the next MELCOM meeting. Members could then give feedback on the proposal and decide whether to participate. Yasmin Faghihi raised the possibility of there being MELCOM funded internships or other projects that we could collaborate on and link to our website. There was some discussion around identifying what the purpose of MELCOM UK is.

## **6. Reports from Institutions and Discussion (See Appendix)**

### **7. Updates**

- Updates were given on MELCOM International (past & future)
- Updates were given on the next MELCOM UK & Pearson Memorial Lecture

## Appendix: Reports from Institutions

### Report from the Bodleian Oriental Institute Library

Lydia Wright

#### I. Structural /spatial changes & Donations/ Grants

The University of Oxford has received a generous donation by the British Foundation for the Study of Azerbaijan and the Caucasus (BFSAC). The donation brings opportunities both on the academic and library side including some additional funding for materials, some staff support for the acquisition of those materials and some modest refurbishment of the Oriental Institute Library space. The Oriental Institute Library will be renamed the Bodleian Nizami Ganjavi Oriental Studies Library, the post for the Subject Librarian for Middle East and Islamic Collections will be endowed and there will be funding for hiring a part time Librarian for Azerbaijan, the Caucasus and Central Asia as well funding for some Technical Services Support. <https://www.campaign.ox.ac.uk/news/the-oxford-nizami-ganjavi-centre>

The Bodleian has lost one of their members of staff for Middle Eastern Acquisitions, Wassilena Sekulova, who has taken up a new job in Qatar. Ms Lena Mazik is her replacement.

#### II. Academic liaison

Oxford is piloting an online reading list system called ORLO which is proving very successful but has not been adopted yet across the University. We are keen to see how well the system copes with resources in vernacular scripts. <https://projects.it.ox.ac.uk/online-reading-lists-event>

#### III. Cataloguing & data management

Colleagues at the Bodleian have been working on a solution for better discoverability of works of fiction in our catalogue after I raised concerns about the lack of ability to browse for different types of fiction in a particular language due to the absence of standardised subject headings for these. In order to allow this the Bodleian has activated the display of the 008/33 literary form value and the 008/35-37 language value in book records which allow readers to perform an advanced search in our catalogue by language, e.g., "Arabic" and then use a Literary form facet to filter by poetry, novels, etc.

The screenshot displays a library search interface. At the top, there are search filters: 'Language' is set to 'Arabic', and 'Resource Type' is set to 'Books'. Below these, there are options for 'AND', 'Any field', and 'contains'. A search bar contains the query 'Language contains Arabic'. A 'SEARCH' button is visible. Below the search bar, there is a yellow banner with the text 'Sign in to get complete results and to request items' and a 'Sign In' button. The main content area shows 'Active filters' with 'Poetry' selected. The search results are displayed as 'PAGE 1 365 Results'. The first result is a book titled 'Mudhakkirāt baḥḥār' by Fāyiz, Muḥammad, published in [196-?] at al-Kuwayt : Maṭba'at Hukūmat al-Kuwayt | 74 p. ; 16.

This is a huge step forward in terms of discoverability of this material locally but also relies on cataloguers imputing the correct data into the 008 fields of the record and would benefit immensely if the imputing of this data became a common practice amongst cataloguers internationally.

### **Report from MEC Library, St Antony's College Oxford**

#### **MariaLuisa Langella**

The Librarian Dr MariaLuisa Langella went on maternity leave at the end of May 2018. Mr Afzal Haus was recruited as her temporary replacement until January 2019. Mr Haus had previously worked as Librarian for Middle Eastern Studies at Exeter University.

Proactive new acquisitions have for the most part been put on hold until the Librarian's return and only book requests coming from Faculty members, students, and readers in general are being treated. Cataloguing operations for these new acquisitions are being pursued and new records are being saved as "provisional", waiting to be checked and updated to full records in the new year. Ms Wassilena Sekulova who helped with cataloguing at the library for the academic year 2017-2018, left the library in July 2018 to take up a new position at the National Library of Qatar. Ms Lena Mazik, who volunteered in the library from November 2017, also left the Library in September 2018 to take up a position at the Bodleian's Acquisition Service. Ms Mazik kindly helped with reclassifying the library's pamphlet collection as well as by providing assistance to readers. Ms Haifa Jajjawi continues to work in the library and assisting with different projects and activities, such as reclassifying the library collection, registering new readers, adding new holdings to existing records on SOLO, and helping with readers' queries.

The book sale project is still ongoing thanks to the precious help of Ms Mary Atkinson, who works as library assistant at the Bodleian Library and helps with this project one morning per week. Several hundreds of books have been sold so far and many are still on offer. The list can be browsed on the library's website <http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/research-centres/middle-east-centre/middle-east-centre-mec-library>

### **Report from SOAS University of London**

#### **Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb**

#### **I. Structural /spatial changes**

##### **a. Appointment of new Director of Library**

After a first unsuccessful round of recruitment back in April 2018, a new Director of Library Services and Librarian (Oliver Urquhart Irvine) has finally been recruited in October and will start in his new role on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2019. He has been so far the Royal Librarian and Deputy Keeper of the Queen's Archives for Royal Collection Trust. Prior to this, Oliver was at the British Library for nine years, where he had a number of roles including Head of the Asian, Middle Eastern and African Department and latterly the Head of the British Library Qatar Foundation Partnership. More information on this appointment is to be found at:

<https://www.soas.ac.uk/news/newsitem135665.html>

##### **b. Restructuring of the Library**

The restructuring of all SOAS professional services, including the restructuring of the Library (which will not wait for the new Librarian after all) has now been initiated, spear-headed by

change managers hired for that specific task, and all professional directorates have shared their vision and strategy to be consulted upon last week (09/11/2018). The new structures will be circulated and opened to consultation on the week starting 26<sup>th</sup> November. In advance of this restructuring exercise, SOAS Registrar Paula Sanderson made very clear the dire financial state of the institution and the need to make several million pounds savings, a lot of which will come from the Library and Estates staffing. So there is little doubt that our role and positions will be heavily impacted, as SOAS Library is being benchmarked against other same-size (but different scope and mission) libraries that have got rid of regional librarians expert in their field in favour of role-based positions. The accent was put on developing the usage and visibility of our Special Collections and supporting scholarly communication across SOAS.

### **c. Library offices moves**

Parallel to this, Estates have been rethinking our space usage as there is pressure to deliver more meeting, research and teaching spaces to our students. This has resulted in the announcement at the beginning of this month that all subject librarians will move in the large open plan office/workroom together with our Acquisitions and Bibliographical Team. Minimal shelving space and desk space will be provided. This will impact on the direct reference service that we have been able to provide so far. But *à la guerre, comme à la guerre...*

## **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. New Offsite Storage**

We moved our offsite material stored in Dagenham to a new offsite storage run by MJF in Rainham in May 2018. The new store MJF is a boxed-storage solution and retrievals are operated by the company. This restricts a bit our access to the collections (especially for further retro-cataloguing).

Large parts of donations backlogs were sent back onsite to be processed.

### **b. Ebooks acquisitions**

In a bid to comply with our “*Electronic Only*” policy, I have tried to acquire as much as possibly from DRM-free providers (Cambridge Core, Brill Ebooks, Oxford Scholarship Online, etc.), so as to limit the forbidding impact of this policy on our external users.

Ebook central have just started offering DRM-free ebooks, but unfortunately they cannot allow us to make those available to external walk-in users as those ebooks are not (yet) decoupled from the other ebooks offered through the Patron Driven Acquisition contract we have with them.

We are favouring less Dawsonera following the discovery that their copying policy was not user-friendly enough (user can only print/copy a certain number of pages from an ebook for all times, unlike Ebook central for example where their printing credit is renewed at each download). Furthermore, Dawsonera had seen important publishers for Middle Eastern Studies pulling out their titles (such as I. B. Tauris) from their platform.

Many publishers have actually started withdrawing their titles from the big aggregators’ platforms and offering their ebooks on their own platforms. This is creating problems for institutional buyers though, as offsite access is not always provided for (no Shibboleth or proxy options, only IP-based access).

### **c. Special collections : import of SOAS manuscripts records data into SOAS GitHub/OPAC**

We have brought our manuscripts data stored in *Fihrist* in-house and they are now discoverable in parts on our public OPAC. Some language coding changes in Fihrist GitHub apparently created some issues for our Digital Library Team.

### III. Customer services

- SOAS Library achieved the Customer Service Excellence Accreditation in July 2017 and passed successfully its first surveillance visit in July 2018.
- We are currently re-exploring the question of the Library 24 hours opening.
- To be able to abide to copyright compliance, the scanning and mounting of Library material for teaching purposes on the school VLE (Moodle) is now undertaken by the Library Customer Services. This is putting renewed pressure on librarians to acquire (out of scope) material that we might had previously rely on neighbouring libraries to provide access to.
- I was nominated in the Professional Support Staff category of the 2018 Director's Teaching prize. My work as subject librarian for Middle East and Islamic studies was much appreciated by a PhD student who nominated me for my help and advice in finding and using resources, commenting on my 'impressive customer service'.

### IV. On-line resources/trials/ consortium/ agreements

In July 2018, SOAS Library acquired (among others):

- the *Financial Time Online* (huge cross-over with regions) on subscription
- the *Brockelmann in English Online* as a one-off purchase (but discontinued the original Brockelmann Online subscription)
- the *World News Connection Archives 1995-2013* (English-language archive of over one million foreign newspaper articles and broadcast transcripts from almost 500 news sources in 130 languages, including news from the MENA region and Central Asia & the Caucasus, as well as titles published in United Kingdom such as al-Hayat, Al-Quds al-'Arabi and Al-Ayyam.).

We reconducted our subscription to *Arab World Research Source s (AWRS)* as usage was proving satisfactory. However, those stats may have been biased as AWRS is hosted by EbscoHost and hence its visibility is naturally much enhanced (searches on our Ebsco Discovery Cross-search tool will automatically bring up results from AWRS).

I was pushing for purchasing *Banipal Online*, but my bid failed against the lack of provision for institutions to perpetual access to their archive (the option is available to individual subscribers). At the moment, the minute we cease our subscription, we would lose access to the online archive of back issues too. The academic demand exists but it is a rather "niche" resource and relatively pricey (£500/year), so this lack of perpetual access broke the deal. Exact Editions were however opened to the idea of a consortial purchase, which might be organised between smaller institutions with a reduced number of students engaged in Arabic literature and translation studies.

I am going to open trials for the databases *Dar al-Mandumah* (I was agreeably surprised by the relevance of its contents to our academic public) and *al-Manhal* (which still comes at a steep price, but they are offering more one-off purchase options these days), and will be exploring the subscriptions option to *Noormags* (apparently it can be done using Harrassowitz as the vendor, see the MEBookVendors discussion list).

New subscriptions requests are nowadays conditioned by equivalent cancellations.

## **Report from University of Manchester Library**

**Paul Tate**

### **New Librarian**

Following the retirement of Jan Wilkinson in September this year, Christopher Pressler has been appointed as the new University Librarian & Director of the John Rylands Library. He has previously been Director of Libraries at the University of London, University Librarian and Director of e-Learning at the University of Nottingham and Dean of Libraries at Dartington College of Arts. He is expected to take up his position in February 2019.

### **Renaming and re-organisation of Near East section**

The Near East section has now been renamed the Middle East section. It has also been approved to make this section exclusively non-Roman script in order to highlight its uniqueness. All English language material pertaining to Middle East studies will be incorporated into the main collections in the New Year.

### **Acquisitions**

The purchase of material in Persian has now slowed considerably due to changes in academic staff and the closure of Persian degree programmes. The library continues to purchase Arabic material, mainly in the fields of literature and philosophy.

### **Nashriyah: digital Iranian history**

The nashriyah project to digitise rare newspapers in the modern history of Iran is continuing and attracts an average of 16,000 visits to the website per month, making it the most visited digital project in the University's history. We welcome collaboration in this project should any members have material that fits within the project's aims. Please see the [website](#) for more information.

## **Report from the Turkish Section of the British Library**

**Michael Erdman**

**January 2018:** I participated in Asia Art Archive's *It Starts With a Story*, presenting on the art and design of the Library's early 20<sup>th</sup> century collections of Turkic periodicals from Central Asia.

**February-March 2018 :** The Library hosted a series of visits from Uzbek senior government and embassy officials aimed at acquainting them with our Chagatai and Uzbek collections, and allowing us to discuss, face to face, enhanced cooperation between the BL and Uzbek institutions. The Library also completed the digitisation of three Chagatai manuscripts of Navoiy poetry, providing images of them to a partner university in Tashkent. The three digitised items will soon be made available on Digitised Manuscripts.

**April 2018:** The Library participated in a roundtable discussion at the Uzbek Embassy on the Cultural Heritage of Uzbekistan Project, presenting on its Chagatai and Uzbek materials and formally meeting Mr. Firdavs Abdulkhalikov, head of the Project.

**May 2018:** I travelled to Iran to participate in the Tehran International Book Fair and meet with suppliers. While purchasing mainly Kurdish materials, I did also have the chance to discuss the possibility of direct purchases from Persian suppliers.



**June 2018:** I travelled to St. Petersburg to participate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Congress for the Cultural Heritage of Uzbekistan Project, as part of which a facsimile of the Library's Zafarname will be produced.

**September 2018:** A Chevening Fellow, Akmal Bazarbaev, arrived from Uzbekistan to work on the Library's holdings of Turkic periodicals. He will be cataloguing the articles in the Library's early 20<sup>th</sup> century collections of periodicals from Uzbekistan, creating the first English-language handlist for the region's serial publications of the early Soviet period.

**October 2018:** I participated in the XXXIII Kononov Lectures at St. Petersburg State University, presenting on the Library's Tatar periodical collections.

**November 2018:** I continued my cooperation with Asia Art Archive, presenting on Constructivism in our Tatar periodicals at Sharjah Art Foundation's *Focal Point* artbook fair.

**December 2018:** I attended the ASEEES 2018 Conference in Boston, speaking on accessing LGBT resources in Turkey and the Library's collections of LGBT and Queer-related resources.

Over the course of the year, over 1000 new titles in Turkic and Kurdish languages were added to the collections. Our back catalogue of Kurdish and Kurdish-related titles was completely computerized and can now be found through Explore. We are working through our Turkic card catalogue, and exploring new ways through which we might be able to have our paper catalogues of Ottoman and Chagatai manuscripts digitised and made available through our Archives and Manuscripts search function.

I drafted and had approved a proposal for a Collaborative PhD Project on our Ottoman Manuscripts collection that went out to tender in the early fall of this year. The project would have seen a PhD student explore our collections for provenance information, creating an understanding of the networks for acquiring manuscripts, as well as the rationales and ideologies behind the creation of manuscript collections in 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century Britain. Unfortunately, no higher education institutions responded to the tender, so the project has been shelved for the current period and will be revisited next fall.

Finally, I've been beavering away on our next major exhibition, *Writing: Making Your Mark*, which will open to the public on April 26, 2019. The exhibition will focus on the history of writing, from its inception 5 millennia ago up to the present, with particular attention paid to the physicality of the skill, and the various manifestations that it takes in different cultures and periods. A number of Middle Eastern items will be featured in the exhibition, and we hope to have related web content up to bring the focus back to the Library's varied collections of hand-written and printed items from the region.

## **Report from the Joint IIS-ISMC Library**

### **Waseem Farooq**

The Joint IIS-ISMC library moved to its new premises at The Aga Khan Centre late June and officially opened for business on the 18th of July. The library in the new location was named 'Aga Khan Library, London'.

Until recently there had not been a formal membership policy for external users. There will be two paid membership options for external users: reference only and borrowing

membership. Researchers will also be able to access the library for a certain number of days per year for free.

Digitisation project – A number of Ottoman rare books will be selected for digitising.

The Arkoun Archive catalogue is almost complete. A consultant was hired to work on it. The books are already available via the catalogue.

The cataloguing of around 300 Arabic backlog books were outsourced to Leila since July. This project is almost complete.