

## 102<sup>nd</sup> MELCom UK Minutes

Date: Friday 23 September 2022 Place: Online, MS Teams		
In attendance	James DOWNS (Exeter) Yasmin FAGHIHI (Cambridge) Waseem FAROOQ (Aga Khan) Carlos L ROCA (SOAS) Lydia WRIGHT (Bodleian)	
Apologies	MariaLuisa LANGELLA (St Anthony's College)	
Agenda	Discussion	Actions (if apply)
1. Welcome and apologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attendees' greetings.</li> <li>No changes in roles reported.</li> <li>Attendees discuss the convenience of widening the membership of the MELCom UK and engage non-ME librarians with an interest in the region or its languages; esp. to make the group more attractive to potential vendors.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The board to explore potential engagement of the committee with other librarians.</li> </ul>
2. Minutes of the 101 <sup>st</sup> MELCom UK meeting and matters arising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minutes of the 101<sup>st</sup> MELCom UK meeting are approved.</li> <li>The general feeling is that the Committee is a good forum for discussing ways of cooperation (detailed in</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The board to try to include discussion of these point of potential cooperation in future meetings.</li> </ul>

	<p>point 5) and members agree to keep discussion about them in the future.</p>	
3. Library updates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members shared individual reports in advance (see appendix). Some points are discussed in more detail during the meeting.</li> <li>• Cambridge has a new World Collections Department, which will explore new ways of collaboration with Faculty.</li> <li>• Attendees discuss the ways in which they select and collect and relate to Faculty and Research staff.</li> </ul>	N/A
4. Consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The attendees agree that the complexity of the consortium requires a separate meeting.</li> <li>• MELCom UK co-chairs are in contact with a librarian based in Paris that leads an international consortium for Japanese electronic resources. The librarian is happy to brief and advise. Attendees agree that a meeting in January can be convenient and feasible. The event is planned as informative at this stage.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WF to contact the librarian.</li> <li>• The board to organise the meeting.</li> <li>• The board to keep the discussion for next meeting.</li> </ul>
5. Possible areas of cooperation for members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As recorded in point 2, the general feeling among members is that the MELCom UK can be a good forum for enhancing collaboration among members, particularly in the areas of acquisitions and cataloguing expertise.</li> <li>• In relation to acquisitions, members reflect on the successful work of MELA for tracking collecting practises of members. Ways to implement that in the MELCom UK are discussed, including a database or an online form.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The board to include these areas of discussion in future meetings when possible and explore other new areas.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WF discusses the idea of appointing a lead for a potential database if that would be the preferred option.</li> <li>• LW discusses how knowing the current scenario can help members decide on collaboration and specialisation in their collecting practices.</li> <li>• YF remarks that embarking on this as a formal project can be more convenient considering the workload implied. Members agree. YF thinks current LMS can help with this task.</li> <li>• LW suggest keeping statistics of what members acquire and WF mentions that JISC Hub can be a helpful tool to compare holdings.</li> <li>• WF, LW and YF agree that this type of activity can rise the profile of the MELCom UK.</li> <li>• It was expected to discuss cooperation with cataloguing and metadata, but due to time constrains, attendees agree to postpone.</li> </ul>	
6. AOB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WF suggest the possibility of having a MELCom UK representative in BRISMES. Members discuss that a similar figure has existed in the past and the general feeling is that having one again could be positive.</li> <li>• LW suggests inviting colleagues to present on aspects of their work that can be of interest for knowledge exchange among members of the MELCom UK (e.g., cataloguing specific languages.) The initiative is welcome by attendees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The board to initiate research on rep. in BRISMES.</li> <li>• The board to invite guest speakers.</li> </ul>
7. Date and location of next meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Members think that it would be interesting to have a future meeting in person.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The board to organise.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exeter is discussed as a possible place, esp. as they have opened new premises for their archives.</li> <li>• Exeter will be hosting the BRISMES Conference in early July.</li> </ul>	
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## Appendix: library reports

### Bodleian Libraries MELCOM UK report

Faculty and Departmental Name Change: Faculty of Oriental Studies and the Bodleian department of Oriental Studies is changing its name to 'Asian and Middle Eastern Studies'.

Staffing: The Bodleian Libraries are in the process of recruiting a new librarian for Caucasian and Central Asian Studies with the view of developing the Bodleian Collections for these regions.

E-resource Acquisitions and Trials: The Bodleian Libraries had some one-off funds last financial year and was able to purchase a number of important electronic resources that have helped plug the gap in our provision of electronic material for Central Asian, Southwest Asian, Caucasian and North African Studies, especially is the languages of those regions. These are some of the resources we have been able to acquire: · Afghan Central Press Digital Archive (DA-ACP) · Afghan Serials Collection · Al-Ahram Digital Archive · Cambridge Archive Editions Online · Cumhuriyet Digital Archive (1924-2020) · Early Arabic Printed Books from the British Library (1475-1900): Literature, Grammar, Language, Catalogues, and Periodicals · Middle Eastern and North African Newspapers Premium Collection (CRL-WIDE1) · Kavkaz Digital Archive (DA-KVZ) – Universal Database Platform · Kavkaz Digital Archive (DA-KVZ) – Global Press Archive Platform

The Bodleian Libraries have trialled NoorMags and NoorLibs for a 3-month period with some good feedback but we still need to review user statistics to determine demand. We have also trialled the resource ArabDigest.

### Middle East archives, DAME (the Digital Archive of the Middle East) and the Arabic World Documentation Unit (AWDU) at the University of Exeter

Archives

We have had some new additions to the archives, including donations of photographs and papers relating to Oman and Yemen from John Carter (EUL MS 476), the Jerusalem Studies archive from Professor Mick Dumper (EUL MS 482), the papers of the Palestine Studies Trust (EUL MS 481) and a collection of Palestinian papers and letters compiled by Harold Styring (EUL MS 478), the son-in-law of Tewfik Canaan and

brother-in-law of Leila Mantoura. I have also just purchased a small collection of letters from Leila Mantoura to Ruth Dayan, the first wife of General Moshe Dayan. The 'Chris Kutschera' photographic archive of Edith Maubec is being collected from her home in Avignon next month.

### **DAME**

The Digital Archive of the Middle East (DAME) project was initiated in October 2021, and has gradually been developing over the course of this year. I am managing the project, which has so far seen the digitisation of some 1,500 images. A digital platform using Omeka-S is under construction and should be online next year.

Interviews for PhD candidates were held in May, and we should have three PGRs starting in a few weeks, with their research (on the Kurdish cultural renaissance, Bahrain land reclamation and the relationship between maps, heritage and national identity in Iraq, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon) involving hands-on digitisation work with our collections as well as exploring ways in which digital techniques can open up new ways of understanding these materials.

We have had unfortunate delays in setting up a dedicated space and obtaining the digitisation equipment that was ordered months ago, but we hope to have two digitisation workstations established shortly and will be hiring two digitisation assistants to photograph selected materials from both our archives and the material held in AWDU.

An important element of DAME is the Kurdish Digital Archive, and we have a postdoctoral research fellow who has been developing partnerships with various archives, libraries and museums in Kurdistan, with the aim of sharing digitised materials, providing research partnerships, reciprocal visits and training in digitisation, cataloguing and so on.

### **AWDU**

Over the last few days, the Arab World Documentation Unit (AWDU), a reference collection of around 100,000 items chiefly on the Gulf and Palestine, has been moved from the Old Library to the University's Institute for Arabic and Islamic Studies (IAIS), from which it was transferred in 2012. We hired a removal team to assist with the packing and shuttling of the crates, but I have basically unpacked and shelved the entire collection myself and am very relieved to report that it all fitted into the space! There has been a degree of rearrangement, with parts of AWDU being weeded and left behind, the insertion and addition of some new collections, including the donation of some 300 books on the history of Iran from the widow of Professor Michael Axworthy, and a collection of papers and documents relating to the 1996 Palestine elections donated by Andrew Ellis, who was an advisor and organiser during the electoral process. There will also be a new Kurdish studies section, including material donated by Omar Sheikmous. Having AWDU back at the heart of the Institute is going to make an enormous difference to the research, teaching and learning experience of staff and students there, and I have a librarian's desk in the new AWDU space to provide reader assistance.

James Downs

### **SOAS Library**

The library's director is moving on to the RIBA as Executive Director of Programs and Collections. SOAS is recruiting a new Chief Librarian. SOAS library has hired a new Law Librarian following the retirement of the previous role holder.

The Reader Services team is growing. They expect to hire new assistants and team leaders to endure user support by library staff during all opening hours.

The library is in the process of changing its LMS. SOAS is recruiting a FTC LMS implementation librarian.

SOAS is launching a newly and rebranded website in October 2022. The librarians are trialling subject guides solutions to be integrated in the new site.

The School is in the process of recruiting a new Director for the SOAS Middle East Institute.

E-resources

Since the last AGM, SOAS has trialled on or purchased new electronic resources focused on the Middle East.

Special Collections

In this first term of the academic year 2022-23, SOAS Library expects to reopen the Special Collections Reading Room and to have access to its stores, which refurbishments are in the final stages.

Similarly, SOAS Library has completed the setting of the Conservation and Digitisation Hub, that will be operative very shortly.

New exhibitions at the Brunei Gallery for the Autumn term will include:

- Empty Cradles: Israel's disappeared children: The lost children of Middle Eastern Jewish Families in Israel
- Highlights of the SOAS Artwork & Object Collections: A display of SOAS's permanent collections
- Forward to the Past: Re-engaging Uli in new experiments: Nigerian Uli paintings

Carlos L Roca