

## BRIEF COMMUNICATION

**Hamid Mahamedi**

An Appreciation

**D**r. **Hamid Mahamedi** retired from his position as Islamica Bibliographer in the Library of the University of California, Berkeley, at the end of 2000. His last day at work was Friday 22 December.

With the UC and Stanford campuses about 50 miles apart, and the closest major Middle East collection 400 miles away at UCLA, and a record of historic cooperation between our libraries, Hamid and I were in frequent contact and worked together on many things. We used to visit each other, somewhat irregularly, until health problems and our various responsibilities took their toll. My final visit to him at UCB was on Thursday 21 December. We had lunch, filled my car with dusty newspapers that UCB had no interest in and that now still await my attention downstairs, and talked about contacts, collections, and Hamid's plans. By chance that Thursday was also the day on which his library colleagues held a small reception in his honor. My daughter and I got to attend the reception; I renewed some old acquaintances; and I got to hear the very nice words that Hamid's colleagues, including his former and current supervisor, and also Larry Michalak, of the faculty, said about him.

I have known Hamid for, I believe, his entire career as a Middle East librarian at Berkeley. His expertise, his knowledge, and his friendship were always available, a phone call or e-mail away, and I grew to depend on him for a number of things. At one point UCB became very interested in interlibrary cooperation, and this led to Hamid's sponsoring a rather grand meeting at the UCB Faculty Club of virtually all university librarians responsible for Middle East collections and selection in California (some of whom may still recall the "membership card" I made up for the fictional CAMEL, California Middle East Librarians). It was a useful meeting that brought together surprisingly more librarians than just those we know from MELA meetings and gave us a good picture of the breadth and depth of interest in Middle East collecting in this immense state. UCB's urging of cooperative efforts led also to the pre-conference meeting on Middle East library cooperation that was held at the MESA/MELA meeting in Phoenix some years ago. By then Hamid had persuaded me to be his co-chair, and so the two of us sat at the head of the table. We were both astounded by

the number of participants in that meeting. (Any lack of follow-up after that meeting, I have to say, was due to me and not Hamid, since I had accepted the responsibility for following up but was then unable to do it.)

Hamid's work in the UCB library was, I believe, a second career. He has a Ph.D. in Persian and is an expert in Old Persian, Pahlavi, etc.—I'm out of touch with the exact terminology—and taught in Iran and at Penn. I think his heart was more in Iranian acquisitions than in other fields, but at UCB he was responsible also for Arabic and Turkish, and from time to time was directly responsible for or had oversight over Hebraica selection. He traveled to Iran numerous times and enriched the UCB collections through his travel. Hamid also has rich contacts among the Iranian community in the Bay Area and elsewhere, which he from time to time has put to the service of the Hoover Institution.

In my opinion, Hamid's greatest contribution to and success at Berkeley was one that cost him a lot personally and professionally. His job, like so many of ours, was originally structured as a bibliographer-cataloger position. Hamid is frank in his dislike of cataloging. He did it because he had to, but he did his best to not have to catalog and to be able to devote his full time to bibliography. This cost him negative evaluations. But he persisted in his efforts and was finally relieved of his cataloging responsibilities—but at some personal cost. Whoever succeeds him will become UCB's *Islamica* or Middle East bibliographer, and not bibliographer-cataloger. Whoever succeeds Hamid in the job should thank him for changing the way the job is structured.

I visited Hamid in Alta Bates Hospital in Oakland after he had his second coronary by-pass operation in September 1995—just a week before I had mine. His by-pass surgery and the lengthy recovery process took, I think, some of the wind out of his sails. He concentrated his efforts on his work, including lengthy travel to Iran. Now that he is retired, he will be returning to Iran for an extensive period and then will come back to his apartment in Oakland.

Hamid has now gone off rather quietly into retirement. He is someone whom I have grown to appreciate as a librarian colleague and to enjoy as a friend, whose presence 50 or so miles away and on the telephone and e-mail I will miss. I hope he has a long, happy, and healthy retirement. Best wishes to Hamid—and to his new wife.

ED JAJKO, 16 JANUARY 2001

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