

Annual Meeting 2000 Orlando

MELA Business Meeting

Nov. 16th, 2000

Disney Coronado Springs Resort, Orlando, Florida

MELA Members in Attendance

Midhat Abraham, Suzan Akkan, Muhammad Al-Faruque, Johnny Bahbah, Joyce Bell, Basima Bezirgan, Joan Biella, Krikor Chobanian, Mohammad Dagman, Mark Day, Roberta Dougherty, John Eilts, Shahira El Sawy, Hikmat Faraj, George Fawzi, Meryle Gaston, Janet Heineck, David Hirsch, Michael Hopper, Ali Houissa, J. Dennis Hyde, Robert Johnston, Shayee Khanaka, Fawzi Khoury, Alissar Khoury, Suad Muhamamd-Gamal, Laila Mulgaokar, Christopher Murphy, Sarah Ozturk, Martha Plettner, Andras Riedlmayer, Kay Ritchie, Jonathan Rodgers, Marlis Saleh, Simon Samoeil, Abazar Sepehri, Mary St. Germain, Dona Straley, Frank Unlandherm, James Weinberger, M. Wilkins, Gamil Youssef, David Zmijewski, Jalal Zuwiyya

Minutes

The 2000 Annual Meeting of the Middle East Librarians Association convened at 9:20 a.m., November 16th, 2000, in the Fiesta Room 7/8 at the Disney Coronado Springs Resort, Orlando, Florida. Roberta Dougherty, President, greeted those in attendance and introduced the officers. Hikmat Faraj moved, and Meryl Gaston seconded the motion, that the 1999 meeting minutes as published in *MELA Notes* 69–70 be accepted. Basima Bezirgan moved, and Sarah Ozturk seconded the motion, that the 1999 treasurer's report also as published in *MELA Notes* 69–70 be accepted. The members in attendance voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Janet Heineck read the treasurer's report. She reported further that at meeting time there were 202 individual members, 26 subscriptions handled by vendors, and 41 subscriptions from self-billing libraries.

Basima Bezirgan noted that conference expenses for the 1998 Chicago meeting were between \$200 and \$250, much less than those for this year's meeting, as quoted in the treasurer's report (see below). Roberta Dougherty observed that MELA's being tied to MESA's choices of meeting sites necessarily involves expenses over which we have no control.

Jonathan Rodgers gave the *MELA Notes* editor's report. In the year just ended, a double issue, number 69-70, appeared in both print and digital versions. It included articles by Andrew Rippin, Ali Houissa, Kemal Bakaršić, and Miroslav Krek. John Eilts and Jonathan are working on digitizing all of *MELA Notes* from the beginning. Their first goal has been partially achieved: Tables of Contents of earlier numbers of *MELA Notes*, no. 1–(1973–) are beginning to appear on the *MELA Notes* website. Jonathan is scanning issues working backwards in time, while John is progressing forward from the earliest issues. Twenty-seven issues have been scanned as of the meeting date. Providing full-text access and searchability of the contents of all past issues, on the model of JSTOR, is the goal.

Jonathan encouraged all members to submit articles for publication in *MELA Notes*. He emphasized that reviewers should always work to complete book reviews promptly for *MELA Notes*. He relayed the strong encouragement of the book review editor, Rachel Simon, to procrastinators among us who hold unreviewed books to complete and submit their reviews without further delay.

It was moved by David Hirsch, and seconded by Dona Straley, to accept Jonathan Rodgers' editor's report as read.

Sarah Ozturk, LS/RCCD/MENA, reported that the Library of Congress MENA cataloging staff processed over 1,000 Arabic, 1,500 Armenian, 850 Turkish, and 120 Persian titles during the past year. The Islamabad office is now on RLIN, an advantage that will permit their creation in RLIN of preliminary bibliographic records in both romanization and vernacular. At this time, only Persian-language records will appear this way, however.

Development of the KBP and revision of the BP classification schedules are current and demanding projects engaging LC staff, who welcome all the help we can offer. Sarah issued a plea to members to send by e-mail questions and suggestions for improvements in these areas to cpsol@loc.gov.

Christopher Murphy, LS/AMED/NES, reported that George Selim retired in June. Beverly Gray has requested a replacement for that position. Mary Jane Deeb is now Arabic lead in the section. Chris now covers Central Asia and Turkey, Ibrahim Pourhadi, Central Asia and the Caucasus, and Levon Avdoyan, Georgian and Armenian. Fawzi Tadros has been promoted. Two stack attendants have been hired, and the backlog of unshelved and un-reshelved materials has been cleared. Chris is pleased with the expansion of the Pakistan office into the former Soviet Central Asia and its current good fortune to capitalize on the strength of the US dollar. In twelve to eighteen months, Ibrahim Pourhadi is likely to travel there for

LC. Mary Jane Deeb traveled to the Middle East and North Africa during the year, while Laila Mulgaokar and Chris went to Turkey. While in Turkey, they focused on acquiring new formats, such as films, audio materials, and a variety of ephemeral materials. They visited many non-governmental organizations in the fields of occupational health and safety and population issues, among others, and hope to acquire the materials of the most active and significant of these organizations. Chris hopes that high-quality microfiche of this material can be produced at the New Delhi office.

All of LC's Ottoman Turkish collection, about six thousand titles and ten thousand volumes, is now under control through a main entry card file. There is a commitment at LC's highest levels over the next several years to turn these card files into machine readable records.

LC's Arabic newspapers hard copy backlog awaiting microfilming now stands at about six to twelve months. The LC goal, not yet realized, is to have all its microfilmed Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Central Asian, and Armenian newspapers listed on its website. In the meantime, we are encouraged to telephone Chris with questions about LC holdings.

Chris is seeking funding sufficient to purchase from IDC the Arabic Manuscripts in The British Library collection on microfiche.[†]

The Near East Section plans to sponsor more public presentations in the format of one-day seminars by visiting scholars on various topics

At the Library of Congress, a recent sixty million dollar donation has provided for creation of eight new endowed chairs and twenty fellowships, the latter to allow junior faculty or newly tenured faculty to come to LC to use its collections.^{††} In addition, LC will be giving a large biennial prize in science and social science areas not covered by the Nobel prize.

Chris acquired for the Library of Congress one of the eight copies of the "Haci Ahmed map" (Venice, 1559).

Michael Hopper asked why LC's Islamabad office was expected to cover Central Asia, and whether local vendors could not better supply this material. Chris replied that local vendors can certainly supply commercial

[†] Editor's note: The Library of Congress has purchased *Arabic manuscripts in the British Library [microform] the complete collection of 15,000 works*. Leiden: IDC Publishers. 45,700 microfiches.

^{††} Editor's note: Library of Congress Fellowships in International Studies <http://www.loc.gov/rr/international/int-fellow.html>. Refer also to: <http://www.loc.gov/loc/kluge/>

and government publications. The Islamabad office, however, is particularly effective at seeking out ephemeral, small-run items of value that do not appear in the market. LC makes use of the services of both commercial vendors and the Islamabad office for Central Asian material.

Roberta Dougherty reported that she had searched through the last five years of MELA meeting minutes to determine the fate of all the proposals submitted at business meetings during that time and if and how they had been acted on. She counted fifteen different proposals made since 1996 that remained as of the meeting date still unresolved or uncompleted. She distributed a document she had prepared that categorized these proposals. An interesting discussion ensued, as Roberta detailed the topics and linked them to members present who were or are still involved in them. In the resulting discussion, it became clear that in most cases good progress had been made and projects were current or that justifiable delays and real problems encountered. The conclusion reached was that the handout was useful and the effort worthwhile: There have been real accomplishments, but some issues need further work. Roberta encouraged everyone to work on the current or delayed projects in order to bring them to completion. Mark Day proposed that this kind of follow-up exercise be made a permanent part of the president's annual report.

Roberta Dougherty asked members for self-nominations for officer candidacy (in addition to those already submitted in advance) and noted that MELA relies on the active participation its members to share the burden of the organization's work. Nominations for Vice-President/Program Chair for 2000–2001 to organize the 2001 meeting in San Francisco were solicited from the floor. Gamil Youssef nominated, and Basima Bezirgan seconded, David Hirsch for this office. David accepted the nomination. Simon Samoeil nominated Michael Hopper, who declined the nomination. For Member-at-Large for 2000–2002, Michael Hopper accepted nomination and joined Karl Schaefer on the ballot. Janet Heineck nominated Abazar Sepehri, who declined the nomination. After the vote, our new Vice-President/Program Chair for 2000–2001 is David Hirsch, and our new Member-at-Large for 2000–2001 is Michael Hopper.

Roberta Dougherty announced that Alissar Khoury would be giving a demonstration of the use of United Nations web-based databases for conducting research on the Middle East at a MELA-sponsored panel later in the MESA program. She hoped that the panel would be well attended. She noted that this would be MELA's third such panel and that it is very important that MELA continue to propose and support these MESA panels. She and Michael Hopper agreed to form the MELA panel committee for MESA

2001. The panel committee will solicit suggestions for a topic, determine a title and write the proposal abstract, select participants, and ensure that the panel application reaches the MESA secretariat by the deadline. They took the immediate opportunity to encourage members to suggest topics or to volunteer to make presentations. These panels, it was emphasized, increase MELA's visibility and allow us to share in the broader intellectual activities of the conference.

Joan Biella spoke on progress on the Arabic cataloging manual. Ali Houissa has set up a website for the manual on which Joan will post the pages she has prepared. A major topic of focus already is the policy for the inclusion and standardization of non-roman fields in bibliographic records. The problems introduced by non-standard romanizations of Arabic and Persian words continue unresolved. Joan looks forward to much discussion of these and other topics on ARACAT.

Michael Hopper spoke to the group about the bibliographic records that Harvard is asking its main vendors in Cairo and Beirut to provide: They should contain author, title, imprint, and physical description information for loading into the Harvard database. These records both assist in cataloging and speed payment to the vendors. Michael asked whether other MELA members would find it useful for their own vendors to provide this service. He said that the cost of producing these "acquisition level" records could be included in the cost of the individual titles and would represent very little extra expense, since they are usually already a component of the vendors' automation systems. John Eilts said that Weinberg in Israel is close to providing such records for LC. Basima Bezirgan said that the University of Chicago receives such records from Casalini Libri. Michael said that Sulaiman's Bookshop list already includes all the necessary fields. Simon Samoeil said that acquisitions records supplied with books would be especially useful for receipt of blanket orders. James Weinberger asked about the percent increase in per title cost and said that for Princeton the additional cost might be a burden. Michael asked others to join him in drafting a letter to these vendors asking that acquisitions records be provided with books to all MELA-member libraries.

Michael Hopper proposed to the group a project to collect from member Middle East librarians and publish on the web statistics for such data as number of titles acquired and catalogued by language, dollar amount spent per language, and number of full time staff in specific areas. He suggested that the availability of comparative collection and financial data can be a useful element for inclusion in budget requests. Ali Houissa said that some institutions could have difficulty in generating and providing

these statistics according to standardized criteria, since they vary from one institution to another. Michael said that these inconsistencies could be reconciled in textual notes provided with the tabular data and that whatever information is available can still be used for the table, despite varying collection practices. Basima Bezirgan asked whether we can find out how many institutions can, will, or already do, provide this information. Simon Samoeil asked whether this collective information could somehow work against us by revealing that some collections are comparatively weak. Roberta argued that these data would nevertheless be a valuable tool, that they would allow comparison among institutions, that they can be used very successfully to make budget requests more compelling to administrations, and that revealing this information would most likely not have negative consequences. Among East Asia libraries, the Council on East Asian Libraries Statistics has been collecting these data on collections, expenditures, staffing, and user services for years with great benefit. [See <http://lark.cc.ukans.edu/~eastasia/cealstat/cealstatistics.html>.] The following motion passed: "We will propose a budget to the MELA Executive Board for approval to develop a web form to which members can annually contribute statistics with this information."

Roberta Dougherty distributed for discussion a handout describing some bylaws changes proposed by Ed Jajko. The first is that the Vice-President/Program Chair be retained on the Executive Board for one year as "Past Vice-President." This provision would effectively reward the outgoing Vice-President for the hard work of preparing the program for the just-completed annual meeting, and the Executive Board would take advantage of that person's experience in planning future meetings. The second is that Executive Board meetings conducted electronically be regarded as equally valid as those conducted in person. After discussion by the group, Roberta agreed to ask Ed to bring his proposal before the membership on MELANET and to prepare it for proper discussion and vote at the 2001 meeting in San Francisco.

Mark Day and Hikmat Faraj described their libraries' experiences with the OCLC Arabic Cataloging Pilot Project. See <http://www.oclc.org/oclc/arabic/>.

Treasurer's Report, November 16, 2000**INCOME**

Dues, subscriptions, Interest income	\$4,595.00
Mailing list sales)	\$150.00
TOTAL	\$4,745.00

EXPENDITURES

Postage and Supplies	\$403.32
MESA: Orlando meeting room rental	\$150.00
Photocopying	\$26.23
Walt Disney Parks and Resorts	\$880.57
<i>MELA Notes 69-70</i> (production, tax, postage)	\$1476.83
TOTAL	\$2,927.95

Checking account beginning balance November 13, 2000	\$7,730.91
Savings account balance November 13, 2000	\$3,513.80

Respectfully submitted,
Janet Heineck
Secretary-Treasurer