

**MELA/MESA Report  
for the George Atiyeh Prize**

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**R**ecceiving the 2002 George Atiyeh Prize has been an honor. I appreciate the opportunity this award gave me to attend the MELA annual meeting and MESA conferences for the first time. At these events I met many people, learned about new topics, and received my first conference tote-bag!

At the MELA annual meeting I met many individuals who specialize and work in the field of Middle Eastern information. Among them were people with many years of experience as well as those just entering this occupation, such as the fellow winners of the George Atiyeh prize. I was exposed to a wide variety of issues by listening to the presentations and comments of the individuals who attended this get-together. By being present during the meeting, I also learned more about the types of activities in which MELA is involved, the ways in which these projects are discussed and developed, and the roles which MELA members play in realizing such plans.

I learned about the interaction and communication between developers and primary users of products during the meetings led by the representatives of RLG and OCLC. I also found out about upcoming interface developments for RLIN and changes to the experimental OCLC Arabic cataloging system.

In addition to providing a memorable place in which to hold the year's annual meeting, the staff of the Library of Congress also presented several interesting programs. I learned about new subject headings and classes related to Middle Eastern materials. The philosophy behind the development of a classification scheme, in particular that for Islamic law, was explicated. Likewise, it was interesting to hear the comments of those who have experience using this new scheme.

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<sup>†</sup> Editor's Note: The author was awarded the 2002 Middle East Librarians Association George Atiyeh Prize. A provision of the Award is that MELA requests recipients of the award submit an essay for publication in *MELA Notes* on a topic inspired by their interaction and communication with librarians and scholars during the MELA and MESA meetings.

Finally, I gained knowledge about the MECAP program, the work it has accomplished in the last year, and the areas in which it experiences difficulties in collecting materials due to political conditions. I also learned more about collection development outside of the US from the presentations given by bibliographers who have experience traveling abroad and collecting materials.

During the MELA meeting, I also found out about some of the activities of Middle Eastern information professionals around the world. I heard a report on the First World Congress of Middle East Studies which recently occurred in Mainz. I also learned about collaborative efforts within the German university system to deal with Middle Eastern materials. Finally, there was also a discussion on the possibility of inviting information professionals from around the Pacific ring to participate in the upcoming MELA annual meeting.

From the meeting presentations and MELA's panel at MESA — entitled "From Bayts to Bytes" — I was also acquired significant information regarding the digital divide in the Arab world and new electronic resources dealing with the Middle East. I learned about many potentially interesting and useful resources but was also reminded of the instability which continues to afflict many of these electronic sources of information and the difficulties which may arise when trying to use them.

During the MESA conferences I was able to attend a wide variety of presentations, including sessions dealing with topics in which I am interested but have not had the opportunity to study in detail, as well as those dealing with topics about which I have acquired only limited knowledge. I was also able to view a number of films which were shown during the conference. During these days, I had the opportunity to catch up with professors, colleagues, and friends who I had not seen in some time. Finally, roaming through the book exhibit exposed me to a variety of vendors and allowed me to become familiar with the types of materials which they offer.

The events in Washington, DC — both MELA's annual meeting and the MESA conference — have been useful to me in class and work during the subsequent months. I look forward to building upon the experiences, knowledge, and acquaintances I made during this time. I want to thank the Committee and members of MELA, again, for awarding me the George Atiyeh prize and providing me with this opportunity.