

Recon Plus
Near East Collection at Yale University Library

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As of the end of March 2003, the Near East Collection completed a special project involving an in-house retrospective conversion of the holdings in the Near East Collection, a project that was started in November 2000. This was a daunting endeavor due to 1) the difficulty of finding adequate bilingual (Arabic and English) staffing for short term employment, and 2) the technical training of this staff in order to produce on-line full-level records, both in Romanized and in vernacular script forms.

These holdings included serials, monographs cataloged according to the Old Yale Classification System and the Library of Congress Classification System, as well as an important number of volumes which had temporary In-process low-level records and which were shelved according to the accession list number provided by the Library of Congress office in Cairo. Their dates of publication go back to the 1960s and 1970s.

A total of 42,100 monograph records have been converted to on-line records and a total of 122 serials have been converted to on-line records. A serious effort has been made to update the monographs and serial records according to AACR2 rules. Retrospectively, Arabic script fields were added to all of our pre-1996 records that already existed as romanized only records in the RLIN on-line system.

Due to the intricacy of the work, the desired result could not have been reached without close in-house supervision of the project. A significant number of titles in the Collection was indeed very old, ranging from the early seventeenth century to the late twentieth century. Although most of the holdings were in Arabic, there were also materials in Persian, Turkish (both Modern and Ottoman), Urdu, Syriac, Latin and other Middle Eastern languages.

Retrospective Conversion Statistics

Monographs	Near East Collection	Total
New record: Yale cataloging		2,093
New record: LC cataloging		1,572
Record updated: CTYA		4,568
Record updated: CTYN		12,664
Record updated: Other		16,392
Provisional records replaced		4,811
Totals:		42,100
Serials:		
New record: Yale cataloging		15
New record: LC cataloging		33
Record updated: CTYA		22
Record updated: CTYN		31
Record updated: Other		21
Totals:		122

Explanation of the above Monographs and serials categories:

“New records: Yale Cataloging” AND “New Record: LC” means that the record numbers given were originally cataloged by the RECON team because these records were not found in RLIN. “Record updated: CTYA”, “Record updated: CTYN”, and “Record updated: Other” means that these records were updated by adding the vernacular and updating the cataloging according to AACR2. “Provisional records replaced” means that records created by the circulation Department had limited bibliographical information were replaced by new, updated, fully cataloged records.

Challenges of the Project:

From the beginning of the project many obstacles and challenges had to be overcome. For example, the Shelf List Cards of the Collection of the Old Yale Classification System lacked the necessary full bibliographical information. Furthermore, a large number of the cards was written by hand and included only the vernacular script information. This shortcoming made the identification of these items extremely difficult. In most cases, the books had to be brought from the stacks to

be accurately identified and cataloged. Names and subject headings and series were updated according to LC Authority files. In addition, many of the nineteenth and mid-twentieth century items were so poorly printed that bibliographic information was almost obscured. An additional challenge was encountered when one single physical item contained in reality several items written in the margins and footnotes area, especially those items that included commentaries and commentaries on commentaries. In many cases the dates, publishers, place of publication and page numbering were missing.

Another challenge we had to overcome was the cataloging of the in-process Collection that was shelved by accession list numbers provided by the LC Cairo Office. Staff had to go into the stacks to retrieve the books, so that each could be cataloged and reclassified according to LC classification system. Authority work on names, subject, series was preformed for this collection that consists of 13,200 volumes.

Finally, the Old Yale Classification number of the records was maintained, because the decision to reclassify them according to the LC Classification Schedules had undesired ramifications for not only the Near East Collection, but also the library as a whole. Also it would have involved excessive work for the Recon team and would have slowed the project.

The least problematic part of the project was the LC Classification system of materials recorded in the shelf list by LC catalog cards. The only update needed in most cases was to bring the records up to AACR2 standards.

Personal Observations:

As supervisor of the project, I had to spend an inordinate amount of time, at least 4 hours a day, supervising the Recon Team. In retrospect, it should be noted that all the efforts that I invested in the project were in the end worth the time spent, because the outcome of the project was beneficial, and the updated records were of high quality. As the result of doing this in-house, rather than contracting the project out to a vendor, the project was completed in a timely fashion and did not need any later clean up.

The total cost of the project reflects an additional special aspect of our work. This figure includes not only the total RECON expenditure, but also includes the expenditures for a four-month extension of the team to catalog a Private Egyptian Collection of about 15,000 volumes

that we had previously acquired. These Egyptian Collection catalog record figures, as a separate endeavor, were not added to the total RECON figures of 42,100.

If any of my colleagues plan a similar in-house project, my experience leads me to offer the advice to add to the proposal provision for a special staff member to supervise the project other than the head of the Department. This will leave you free to do your daily work.

COST:

**Yale University Library
Area Collections For Recon
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	Actual FY 2001	Actual FY 2002	Actual FY 2003	Three Year Totals
Expenses				
C&T Salaries	113,938	111,882	105,036	330,856
C&T Benefits	34,129	31,917	33,611	99,657
Total Expenses	148,067	143,799	138,647	430,513

Using an average C&T rate of \$12.90 per hour, the total amounts to approximately 25,650 hours.

This translates to the equivalent of approximately four full-time C&T's for each year of the three year period.