

MELA NOTES 16, February, 1979

LC MEETING

LC began using the MARC-S format in cataloguing Arabic serials in 1973. In November 1975 and June 1976, all Arabic language records in the LC MARC-S serials file were tape loaded into the OCLC data base. Since June 1976, LC has been doing all of its new serials cataloguing directly into CONSER.

The following statistics, taken from a sample survey done by LC early in 1978, reflect the extent of their input of Middle Eastern language records:

<u>Language</u>	<u>Titles</u>	<u>% of Total in Data Base</u>
Arabic	200	64
Urdu	55	42
Turkish	50	41
Persian	10	8

These statistics represent current titles only. No particular category of publication or subject area is given priority.

The only major difficulties we had encountered with LC input records were those caused by indexing errors and partial records. The former, due to a failure to input the indicator that suppresses the initial article of a title, have already been corrected by LC. Partial records, however, are somewhat more of a problem because they force us to defer our processing of a record until it has been fully updated and completed by LC. Like any record input by LC, partial records (records which contain only descriptive cataloguing, but no subject headings or classification) are locked and therefore cannot be edited on-line. The delay between the original input and the final completion of a record is great because of the low priority of Middle Eastern language records in LC's cataloguing assembly line. Because LC demonstrates no willingness to forego this procedure, as it accommodates their processing work flow, our only hope is that the time lag between initial input and final update will be reduced once their new priority system has been implemented.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As suggested earlier, CONSER moved rapidly from the idea to the execution. At the time it was originally envisioned, CONSER was seen as a way to eliminate much duplication of effort in union list building. A great sense of urgency prevailed. Both the timing of the project and initial data base building efforts reflect this urgency. CONSER participants are now paying the price for this haste by expending a great deal of time and energy editing sketchy machine loaded records that contain a great number of errors. (This may be more true for Middle Eastern language records than for others.)

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Ironically, it takes more time to edit one of these records than to input a new one. A terminal operator cannot usually judge how to change an existing record. Therefore, a cataloguer's time is spent reviewing these records to recommend changes.

Underlying the goals set by CONSER and by extension all data base projects are certain assumptions about on-line bibliographic records. First, they are easier to store, update, and retrieve. Second, a greater number of access points are possible. For some, these assumptions are axiomatic. CONSER may be so dynamic, due to changes in rules and standards and shifts in administrative responsibility, that these assumptions, at least regarding serial records, are being challenged.

Although it is premature at this point to attempt a definitive evaluation of CONSER, it is nevertheless judicious to examine the project's goals and the measures taken to reach them thus far so that in the future, well-informed decisions can be made in planning projects that rely on manipulation of CONSER data. CONSER has grown in the course of its brief life-time from a file building project for the purpose of union list activities to one whose goal is high quality bibliographic records that will provide the basis of a national and eventually international serials bibliographic control system. Although these two goals are to a degree mutually inclusive, the order and manner in which they have evolved have created some serious obstacles that threaten their eventual realization. For example, until recently, both successive and latest entry cataloguing were permitted in the CONSER data base. The extent of duplication of records resulting from this practice will have to be carefully assessed before union list projects can be started. (Mrs. Glasby mentioned that while LC recognizes the latest entry records as a problem, no satisfactory solution is as yet in sight.) Challenging the realization of a national serials bibliographic control system is the lack of authority control in OCLC. When ARL issued its report of the National Serials Pilot Project in 1972, an authority file was envisioned as an integral part of the National Serials Data Program. CONSER has yet to and probably never will develop authority control. Institutions are now individually investigating procedures for how to implement it on a local basis.

In conclusion, before MELA would attempt to undertake a union list project using records in the CONSER data base, the following issues should be examined and discussed:

1. Who has central responsibility for the project, and how does this relate to that of other participants?
2. What standards will be set? Are they mutually compatible, and do they contribute positively to the outcome of the project?
3. What are the unique requirements of Middle Eastern language records, and are they being satisfied?

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REPORT ON CAIRO OFFICE by M. W. Albin

The past year was probably the high water mark of the Cairo program. To LC and participants we mailed 500,700 pieces, up 33% from the previous year, which was itself an all-time high. The likelihood that in FY '80 Egypt will lose its status as a special foreign currency country and the fact that we will have to cast our lot in Congress with competing demands for NPAC dollars make it unlikely that anything like the same volume of material will again pass through our office in one year. For participants this means contributing from their own budgets for materials that they will receive from Cairo and for administrative services such as preliminary cataloging, card production, and handling. For LC it means that we cannot be confident that Cairo will be a backstop for acquisitions from countries where, for political or commercial reasons, coverage is imperfect.

Let us turn from this vexatious problem to a review of some of our activities during the recent past. The 1977 Accessions List: Middle East carried an author-title index in the December issue. This was a compromise. It appeared that main entry access was inadequate and subject access too expensive to undertake. Title indexing was a middle way. If you find it useful, we will continue it; if you don't, we won't.

As you know, Syrian and Lebanese imprints, but for a half-dozen exceptions, are no longer acquired by Cairo. You should also be aware that LC has stopped receiving materials from these countries through Cairo; therefore the Accessions List will no longer work for these two sources.

We have limited acquisition of non-Egyptian monographs to imprints of the current and the two preceding years. North African coverage no longer goes back to 1970.

I want to thank you for reviewing your newspaper subscriptions. The limitations on titles that the Office acquires will save a great deal of money. Your airmail newspapers should begin arriving soon. Some of you have already begun to receive the first shipments.

I have asked in a memorandum dated October 23, 1978 that all participants review their periodical subscriptions. The fact of the matter is that within twelve months time it is virtually certain that you will have to pay for all the periodicals that you receive from Cairo. In order to give you additional information on which to base your selection, we have recently mailed you a supplement to the "Annual List of Serials" containing the prices of all the titles we now receive.

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Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting, November 8, 1978 - Undergraduate Library, University of Michigan.

The meeting was called to order by the President, Fawzi Khoury (University of Washington), who announced the following major agenda items: officers' reports, and discussion of the Library of Congress' tentative decision to romanize those parts of the catalog records of Arabic and Persian material which have heretofore appeared in the script itself. The Secretary-Treasurer gave her report, which appears elsewhere in this issue. The Editor's report appears elsewhere in this issue as well. Edward Jajko (Yale), Vice President-Program Chairman, reported on his attempt to arrange for a scholarly panel at this year's MESA meeting. Mr. Jajko said that the difficulty of assembling a group of committed panelists proved in the end too great and resulted in there being no MELA panel at MESA this year. He apologized to and thanked Eleazar Birnbaum (University of Toronto), who had volunteered a paper for such a panel. Mr. Jajko suggested that, in light of this experience, the MELA Program Chairman who wishes to arrange for a MELA-sponsored panel at MESA ought to begin his/her organizational effort at the previous year's MELA meeting.

Fawzi Khoury, President, clarified the account in the LC Information Bulletin of August 4, 1978 that he was the leader of the delegation of MELA members to the Library of Congress. Mr. Khoury acknowledged that Edward Jajko had done the actual organizational and managerial work that made the meeting possible.

Fawzi Khoury gave a detailed report of his trip to the Middle East to attend the Second Arab Conference on Bibliography in Bagdad, December 3-12, 1977. He visited Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, meeting other librarians, book dealers, and publishers partly with the aim of developing acquisitions relationships between local book dealers and the University of Washington library. He described the places he visited and, in particular, the conference itself. Mr. Khoury concluded his report by encouraging the new Executive Board to consider meeting once each year in addition to the annual meeting in November. The outgoing Executive Board found such interim meetings useful, he said.

Mr. Khoury also acknowledged the several letters he had received from MELA members proposing that MELA's Executive Board adopt and make known to the Middle East Studies Association a position on the issue raised by MESA's selection as 1979 MESA meeting site of Salt Lake City in Utah, a state which has not yet ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. Mr. Khoury sent copies of the letters to Richard Bulliet, MESA's Executive Secretary-Treasurer, and MELA's Executive Board did not discuss the matter. Finally, Mr. Khoury encouraged MELA members to make their support of legislation that would benefit libraries known to their state and national representatives, and he thanked the other members of the Executive Board for their help during the year.

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Martha Dukas announced her departure from the position of Middle East Library head at the University of Texas. She had the job description mailed to all MELA professional members and encouraged anyone interested to apply.

Chris Filstrup (New York Public Library) announced that COMRAD (Committee on Machine Readable Arabic Data) would meet the next morning, Thursday, November 9, and that interested non-members were welcome to attend.

Edward Jajko announced that he had received a letter from the editor of the Unesco Bulletin for Libraries inviting him or another MELA colleague to contribute an article to a 1979 issue of the Bulletin on Middle East collection building in the United States. Mr. Jajko is unable to do the article now, and any MELA member who would like to prepare it should write to or telephone Mr. Jajko.

After John Eilts (Michigan) repeated the hours and locations for MESA registration and for the book exhibits, Fawzi Khoury announced that all the standing committees organized at MELA's Ann Arbor workshop in 1975 are dissolved, owing to their inactivity. The newer COMRAD remains the only MELA committee. There were no objections to this action.

John Eilts reviewed the activity on the Arabic Script Union List during the year and welcomed contributions in almost any form. The list includes modern Turkish cataloging in addition to that in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish. If anyone not now a contributor would like to contribute to the list, he or she should write to John Eilts letting him know the expected quantity of contribution and what section of his/her collection is being represented.

Nominations for 1978-79 MELA Executive Board members were as follows: for Vice President-President Elect, David Partington (Harvard) and Nassif Youssif (Minnesota); for Secretary-Treasurer, Brenda Bickett (Georgetown) and Marsha McClintock (Ohio State); and for Editor, Chris Filstrup (New York Public Library) and Amnon Zipin (Ohio State).

John Eilts questioned the constitutionality of Edward Jajko's moving directly into the MELA presidency at this meeting, given the fact that he had been elected simply as Vice President and Program Chairman. Other members at the meeting stated that it was their understanding that passage during the summer of the bylaws amendment automatically making the Vice President the President the following year applied to the current officer and that it was assumed that Mr. Jajko was to be the next MELA President. Mr. Eilts' proposal for a separate election of Mr. Jajko as President received no support and was withdrawn.

After the candidates identified themselves to the group, ballots were distributed. Results were: for Vice President-President Elect, David Partington (16), Nassif Youssif (4), abstention (1); for Secretary-Treasurer, Marsha McClintock (11), Brenda Bickett (10); and for Editor, Chris Filstrup (19), Amnon Zipin (2).

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The next item of new business was discussion of the upcoming romanization by the Library of Congress of all its Arabic and Persian cataloging. Martha Dukas stated her opinion that the Library of Congress' decision to romanize was not based on a consideration of all its options. She noted that her colleague at the University of Texas, the South Asia librarian, is leading a campaign among other South Asia librarians to convince the Library of Congress to reverse its decision for full romanization. Ms. Dukas proposed that MELA attempt to do something similar. Chris Filstrup said that actually most South Asia librarians are in favor of romanization because of the variety of sub-continent scripts and that he believes it is unlikely that at this point the Library of Congress would reverse its decision to romanize. One member recalled that before the PL-480 program began, the Library of Congress issued its cards for Sanskrit and maybe Hindi in fully romanized form.

Edward Jajko said that he was asked by Dr. Selim of the Library of Congress to bring up the fact that the plans for romanization described in the LC Information Bulletin of October 27, 1978 are not supported by everyone in the Library. Drs. Atiyeh and Selim are opposed to them and would like a continuation of the use of the original scripts in cataloging. According to Dr. Selim, the Library of Congress is committed to listening to voices on both sides of the issue, although the "substantial amount of negative criticism" required to cause the Library to modify its plans would have to be substantial indeed, it appears, since other groups of area studies librarians have expressed to LC satisfaction with the prospect of fully romanized records.

Eleazar Birnbaum said that elimination of the title page transcription from the card would do away with the means by which the correctness of the romanization could be checked and would increase the range of possible card error.

Seyed Moosavi (Texas) pointed out that total romanization of cataloging does a disservice to those who do not read or write English and who must use university resources in Middle Eastern languages in research or course work. He also criticized what he saw as inaccuracies in the LC Persian romanization system.

Dr. Selim repeated that those who wish to write to the Library of Congress stating their support of or opposition to romanization must give reasons for their position and the advantages to LC of adhering to it.

Chris Filstrup said that once we assume that users must find their way through a sometimes inconveniently romanized catalog, the argument for total romanization fails when the user cannot be confident, for lack of representation of the title page script, that he has really found what he is looking for.

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Edward Jajko added that romanization of Arabic cataloging could make it difficult for users of the NUC in countries outside the United States to recognize particular Arabic editions described in a romanization scheme foreign to them without the reproduction of the script. He said that, according to what Dr. Selim said earlier, if there is a strong enough voice in favor of not romanizing Arabic, that language/script could be held out of the group scheduled for romanization.

Amnon Zipin (Ohio State) wondered whether it was appropriate for the position on romanization being prepared by COMRAD to be passed by the Executive Board as MELA's statement on the issue to the Library of Congress. Mr. Zipin moved that the Executive Board in consultation with COMRAD draw up a MELA stand on romanization of Arabic script in cataloging.

David Partington said that he would not vote to approve such a motion until he knew what the feeling of the Executive Board was and added that he is very strongly opposed to romanization.

There followed a discussion of the mechanism by which a written resolution produced by COMRAD and the Executive Board could be made known to the membership and, unless there is a negative response, conveyed to the Library of Congress by their deadline for such comment of January 15, 1979. An informal poll of the new Executive Board showed unanimous opposition to romanization at this time. Several versions of a motion were put forward embodying this as MELA's position but varying in the degree of opposition to be expressed and in the wording of the substantiation of MELA's position and in that of the alternate course to be recommended to LC. The motion finally accepted, proposed by Martha Dukas, is as follows:

That the Executive Board draft a letter to be circulated by December 15th to the membership of MELA and sent to Joseph Howard unless it is opposed by them stating that there is considerable opposition to total romanization and that the membership urges the Library of Congress to study further means of preserving the Arabic script in mixed records through index registers or other means.

Michael Albin (Library of Congress) suggested that, in light of LC's budgetary restrictions which may cause them to cease production of phototypeset Arabic cards and NUC copy if we oppose romanization immediately, a phrase should be inserted in the letter to Mr. Howard that MELA does this with the understanding that the card copy will continue to appear in the NUC until such time as LC makes its final decision.

Eleazar Birnbaum emphasized the importance of making it clear to the Library of Congress that the forthcoming letter to them represents the feeling of the entire MELA membership on the romanization issue and not simply that of the Executive Board.

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Chris Filstrup announced the time of the COMRAD meeting the following day and repeated that interested others were welcome to sit in.

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT by Janet Heineck

There are at present 51 professional and 97 associate members of MELA, and 48 separate subscribers to MELA Notes. New members whose names have not yet appeared in MELA Notes are Suzan Akkan, Carol Hansen, Laurie Smith, and Todd Thompson. MELA's current savings account balance is \$1,682.21. The total expenses for producing Notes No. 15, comprising printing, postage and envelopes costs came to \$154.90. The Arabic Script Union List went into a second "printing" of 5 copies. All 25 copies have now been sold, with payment received for 18 of the copies to date.

EDITOR'S REPORT by James Pollock

During these first six years of our Association's life most of the distribution of MELA Notes has been handled by our friends here at the University of Michigan, both library staff and clerical help from the Near East Center, as I believe. This has been a tremendous assist, and one that is greatly appreciated, in the effort to keep lines of communication going among members of the Association. Indeed, communication is the purpose for which we organized, and the Notes is our mutual vehicle of expression. So now, we say for MELA a hearty thanks to John Eilts and his colleagues here for their valued assistance. And, we hereby resolve on everyone's behalf, that the next Editor will get further willing aid, plus an increased flow of written and verbal Notes material. If there is a type of feature you can't find anywhere in the ordinary library paper that is rampant as a beast upon your desk, please call for a presentation of that useful feature in the Notes. This is where ideas come from, a felt need.

With this report, Pollock's fingerprints are hereby lifted from the Editor's desk. Believe me, this has been an exhilarating job, and I am really glad to have had this experience and the vote of your confidence in the assignment. Of course, it is "a thing that extends a person", as the jailer in medieval Cairo would have said (in translation, that is) as he proudly pointed to the rack, on his guided tour for visiting politicians and other consumer groups. Nevertheless seriously, as one learns the trade of editing and publishing, one knows, because it is written both on his cuffs and on his casts, that more could be done if only there were more expertise in hand, more time, more money, more help, and more of the aggressive, beautiful and communicative librarian-scholars that we keep coming to



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MELA meetings to socialize with. That is, we need more translators like Abazar and Mike to bring us news from other Middle East librarians, more book-listers like Deirdre and Louis, and more travelogue artists like Ibn Battutah Eilts to tell us what dealers we may hopefully pass a few of our ace titles to in the acquisition effort. We need more library researchers like Dave and Marsha and Wolfgang who can ponder the chessboard of our profession and signal trends and options to this growing association of interested participants. We need more teachers of Middle East librarianship like Richard and Eleazar. And what would we do without both the traditional and computerized sleuthing of Miroslav Krek and Carl Petry?

Now we must take a second look at the costs of publication. We have a generous balance on hand in the treasury, and \$1,000 of that is a rotating Publications Fund by the 1977 action that we took. Most of that fund rotated during 1978, and came back into the treasury with a happy increase. The Arabic Script Union List project made all its sales, and as a side effect it has helped to generate interest in funding and producing the Near East National Union List at the Library of Congress. This has been a long-standing goal of this Association.

For the publication of the Notes we must expect to spend more of our smaller dollars, in order to do the job we all want to do. Michigan's Library Printshop, for instance, can no longer print for us at the nominal fee of a penny a page. And postage is a critical and increasing factor to recognize. Some of our minor office expenses in these first years have been carried by our employing institutions, but gradually we librarians will probably have to pay more of the price for our Association's professional activity. Since our dues are gauged to the size of our costs of publication and office work, perhaps in the Annual Meeting for 1979 we will be voting on how much to raise our dues and subscription prices.

When our Association began its existence six years ago you generously declared it was the province of the Editor to care for matters of paper size, type face and layout. This is the normal scope of an Editor's privilege and duty, and so I believe you will now reaffirm your recognition of these friendly, secure and unguarded boundaries. Your interests and preferences, with reasons, are welcome views and alternative slants needed. This outbound Editor has an old history of grade C-level performance in knowing how to use committee structures in evaluating these or other matters. Of course, convenience and readability are must items in publications, and the quality content level that the Notes always hopes for is reached by non-profit writers, all friends and members of MELA. It sure has been amazing how material has appeared for use when very much needed. Finally, a sincere thanks to this expressive community, and hearty encouragement to many minds yet in the labor room. Our new Editor will be on call when you are ready!

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COLLATION: News of Members

Richard Cooper is now acting Head of Berkeley's East Asiatic Library. His replacement as Islamic Librarian is James Weinberger, a doctoral candidate at the university.

Frances Morton has arrived on board LC as a Persian cataloger. In Dallas, Frances informed me that she had completed her training and was attacking LC's fabled backlog. When I wondered about compound names and other main entry pitfalls, Frances irrepressibly told me that she was reading up on tashayyu and the like and that she did not shunt aside problem titles in favor of simpler ones. She gave evidence of this by pointing northeast in the direction of her desk and pronouncing two shelves of Persian books cleared, cataloged and sent on their way.

Martha Dukas has returned to the Boston area, this time at Boston Public Library as coordinator of processing.

Abazar Sepehri is now Head Librarian, Middle East Collections, University of Texas at Austin. Abazar is also working on his doctoral thesis, a study of Persian collections in the United States, for the library school at the University of Chicago.

Janet Heineck has left the University of Chicago to live in the Seattle, Washington area. She is presently working for the telephone company.

At the University of Chicago, Paul Sprachman, a Ph.D. candidate in Persian literature, replaced Sepehri as Persian specialist, and Nabila Mango is now Middle East cataloger.

Beverly Brewster, Assistant Professor at Catholic University, died on September 25, 1978 at the age of 39. Dr. Brewster had taught at the Library Schools of Pahlevi University and the University of Tehran and had also served as a technical supervisor for the Tehran Book Processing and Documentation Center. A member of MELA, Dr. Brewster's primary interest was international librarianship. Her American Overseas Library Technical Assistance was published by Scarecrow Press in 1986.