MELA Notes

MIDDLE EAST LIBRARIANS ASSOCIATION

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NOT SO QUIET ON THE FAR EASTERN FRONT

　　Transliteration schemes continue to roil library waters.
At about the same time that LC announced its inclination to move
to total romanization in order to include Middle Eastern materials
in MARC, it also voiced a liking to pinyin, a new transliteration
devised by the People's Republic of China to romanize Chinese
characters. Sensing that pinyin is the wave of the future, LC
wants to make the transliteration switch coincidentally with the
closing of the catalog and introduction of AACR 2. This would
make a clean break with the older Wade-Giles system and nicely
commit new Chinese cataloging to Mainland approved pinyin. Such
a change obviously would reflect a reversal in the international
statuses of Taiwan and Mainland China.

　　I think everybody agrees that neither Wade-Giles nor pinyin
is markedly superior to the other. Pinyin does allow aggregation
of phonetic units to make "words," but, because Chinese characters
are ideographs and not phonetic signs, any romanization scheme is
necessarily imprecise. A phonetic unit such as "chu" can represent
a number of different graphic characters. Only by incorporating
superscript numbers -- a typographical nightmare -- can romanization
gain precision. Nobody thinks this is practical for a library
catalog. Arguments in favor of one system over the other then take
on historical and political tones. Discourse takes place in terms
of tradition versus modernity. Responses to a recent questionnaire
on whether research libraries preferred LC to keep Wade-Giles or to
switch to pinyin showed a slight majority for pinyin. However, a
strong majority of the libraries with large East Asian collections
opposed pinyin, either altogether or until the PRC system is better
standardized and shows promise of stability. The stakes are high.
If LC changes to pinyin, a library with a Chinese collection either
has to close its catalog and open a new one, or has to change
access points back to Wade-Giles. Sceptical of LC arguments that
the change to pinyin by the New York Times, news magazines, and the
British National Library marks the demise of Wade-Giles (and other
Western Orientalist transliterations), RLG has urged LC to delay
its decision.

　　The situation is complicated by the fact that RLG has contracted
with LC to develop the hardware and software necessary to make
Chinese characters machine readable and MARC-compatible. RLG's
position is that it is better to wait until the automated Chinese
character file is ready and then make the Wade-Giles/pinyin decision.
By then (1983) the consequences of switching or not switching will
be better understood. But LC insists that it is faced with a now

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or 'not in the foreseeable future' decision. Either it jumps on
the pinyin bandwagon in time for the opening of the new, AACR 2
catalog, or it sticks with Wade-Giles for another epoch. LC has
distributed a second questionnaire that does not allow the choice
of delay. Libraries must make the tough decision now. No more
flirting with pinyin. Betroth or desist is the LC challenge.

In devising its own transliteration system, the government
of China has made romanization an international issue. In
response, LC is asking whether the weight of the Orientalist past
should hold its own against the power of the Orient's present.
LC is really querying research libraries whether their catalogs
should reflect the discontinuities of China's history. Should
libraries stick to the conventions of the past, or should they
let the old die and go with the new? Will it be Mao, Tse-tung
or Mao, Zedong; Peking or Beijing? Will libraries follow
professors of the nineteenth century or mass media of the twentieth?
In playing the role of provoker, LC has made international
relevance a central factor in deciding which transliteration to
follow. It is uncertain whether LC will persuade the large Far
Eastern collections to effect a cultural revolution in their
catalogs. But it is characteristic of the massive push toward
computerized standardization that everybody -- the local branch
that circulates Dream of the Red Chamber as well as large Chinese
vernacular collections -- has a stake in the decision. It is to
LC's credit that it has floated the balloon and invited the fireworks.

CF

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MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING, SALT LAKE CITY, NOVEMBER 7, 1979

At the end of the morning program*, Rashid Wu and the
University of Utah treated us to lunch in a lovely dining room
with an alpine view and then to a tour of the Aziz Atiya library.
The latter included an exhibit of the library's finest manuscripts.
Après déjeuner we recollected for our annual business meeting.
In the absence of Ed Jajko, who was ill, David Partington, Vice-
president, presided. Marsha McClintock gave the treasurer's report.
MELA started the year with $1874.12. Income from membership dues
($232), sales of Arabic Union List ($560), the membership list and
back issues of the Notes ($76,50)and interest ($85.30) totalled
$953.80. Expenses were MELA Notes ($694.68), cancelled subscrip-
tions ($9) and production of the Arabic Script Union List
Supplement ($504). An excess of expenditures over income of
$253.88 reduced our balance to $1620.24. McClintock noted that
MELA was fiscally sound. In 1980 MELA will receive income from
the Arabic Script Union List Supplement, catch up on unpaid dues,
and reduce the expense of producing the Notes.

Chris Filstrup reported on COMRAD's role in stimulating
individual and institutional responses to LC's proposed move to
total romanization of Arabic script materials. Frances Morton,
MELA's liaison to ALA, reported on the activity of the Committee
for Cataloging Asian and African Materials, which approved a
romanization table for Santali and discussed the pros and cons of
pinyin. The editor of MELA Notes apologized for tardy publication
of issues past, promised prompter delivery in 1980, and pled for
submissions.

The membership elected Basima Bezirgan (Texas) Vice-president/
Program chairperson.

At the close of the business meeting, Partington presented
to James Pollock a bound volume of MELA Notes 1 - 15 as a token of
our appreciation of Pollock's outstanding work as MELA's premier
editor.

[*All of the morning and most of the afternoon of MELA's annual
meeting was devoted to a program of oral reports on collection
building, technical services,and public services. Full papers on
which the reports were based will be published separately in the
near future.]

BIBLIOGRAPHIC INSTRUCTION QUESTIONNAIRE by Francine McNulty

During the first week of December 1979, seventy six questionnaires were sent to Middle Eastern librarian colleagues in the United States and Canada who are professional or associate members of MELA. My purpose in formulating the questionnaire was to gather information on the extent to which MELA members are currently engaged in BI, and to gauge the amount of interest in BI and attitudes concerning its importance relative to other professional responsibilities, and also to solicit suggestions concerning what MELA might do to promote bibliographic instruction. Although only twenty of the seventy six questionnaires were returned, the number of libraries represented by the respondants is actually forty three percent of the American and Canadian libraries on the MELA membership list.

The results of the survey are summarized in the following table and are incorporated in the list of recommendations. Without exception , respondants indicated that Middle Eastern librarians should be interested in BI, even though only one fourth of them actually assign top priority to it. Those who do not devote a great deal of time to BI are unable to do so because of competing interests: administrative responsibilities and cataloging backlogs receive higher priority.

Several respondants indicated an interest in a workshop at which MELA members could exchange experiences in providing BI, learn teaching and organizational skills which promote more effective instruction, and identify teaching materials which could be cooperatively developed. In the New England area, an excellent resource is already available to coordinate and present this kind of workshop. The Bibliographic Instruction Committee of the New England Chapter of ACRL, in conjunction with its New England Bibliographic Instruction Collection (NEBIC) Subcommittee, has been sponsoring workshops for librarians who seek training in instructional techniques, and who want to know how to design syllabi and other teaching aids. These workshops are specifically designed for small groups of librarians (maximum thirty) of similar interests so as to generate full participation and exchange of ideas and information. Based on a model developed and extensively tested by the Committee, the small workshops are tailored to the specific needs and interests of the participants.

In conclusion, while all respondants to my questionnaire acknowledge the importance of bibliographic instruction, most are

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limited in the amount of instruction they are able to provide
because of the lack of time to create the necessary teaching
aids. Nearly every respondant agreed on the need for MELA
members to cooperate and share the responsibility for producing
such materials. MELA, by channeling our members' enthusiasm
for BI into constructive projects aimed at developing teaching
skills, exchanging ideas, and designing a package of instructional
materials, can perform a valuable service to both Middle Eastern
librarians and non-specialists alike.

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I.   Recommendations of MELA members concerning MELA's role in
     promoting BI.

     A.   Publications

          1.   Syllabus for course on Near Eastern bibliography.
               "MELA could prepare a BI syllabus categorized
               according to area, period, and major academic
               discipline...With a standardized syllabus,
               librarians could...instruct BI courses or give
               course related lectures at their schools' Middle
               Eastern Centers...Such a syllabus might be compiled
               by submitting questionnaires to each MELA member
               for suggestions in the areas in which s/he feels
               most competent. Correlation could be accomplished
               by representative committees under a responsible
               chairman who could see the syllabus through to
               publication."

          2.   Pathfinders on particular subjects.

          3.   Point-of-use guides which explain how to use
               difficult bibliographic and reference tools.

          4.   Explanation of how to conduct subject searches
               in the card catalog using LCSH.

     B.   MELA should sponsor a BI workshop for its membership.

II. The following materials will be contributed to LOEX* by
     these libraries by March 1, 1980:

     A.   Course Syllabi

          Ohio State University Libraries. Marsha McClintock,
          Middle East Librarian, instructor, five credit course
          for undergrads and grad. students.

          University of Minnesota, Wilson Library. Nassif
          Youssif, Head, Middle East Library, instructor,
          "Bibliography of Middle East Studies," full course
          for undergrads and grad. students.

     B.   Point-of-Use Guides

          Ohio State University Libraries

C.   Guides to the Literature

      Alderman Library, University of Virginia

      General Libraries, University of Texas at Austin

      Harvard College Library

      Islamic Studies Library, McGill University

      Wilson Library, University of Minnesota

*While most respondants indicated that they had designed some
type of teaching aid or guide to the literature, very few
indicated their intention to contribute to LOEX. All MELA members
are again urged to contribute to this worthwhile project. The
address of LOEX:
          Project LOEX
          Center of Educational Resources
          Eastern Michigan University
          Ypsilanti, Michigan 48197

III. Bibliographic instruction at responding MELA libraries

Institution	librarian gives ME BI	ME bibliog. course at Near East center	library gives gen. BI to grads	library gives gen. BI to undergrads	Area/Period/Language Emphasis of ME BI
Arizona	ah			X	ACMWV ICMWV NCMWV TCMWV SCMWV
Berkeley		X	X	X	O
Georgetown			X	X	
Harvard	ah	X		X	ACMWV IMWV
Indiana	ah	X		X	ACMWV NMWV
McGill	*1	X	X	X	ACMWV TCMWV ICMWV
Minnesota	ci fc	X	X	X	ACMWV ICMW
New York U.	ah		X	X	ACMWV ICMWV NCMWV TCMW
Ohio State	ah cr fc	X	X	X	ACMWV ICMWV NCMWV TCMWV
Princeton	ah cr			X	ACMW IW NW TW
Toronto		X	O	O	ACMWV ICMWV NCMWV TCMWV
U.Tex.,Austin	ah *2		X	X	NMWV ACMWV ICMWV
U. Va.	ah cr		X	X	ACMW SCMW NCMW
Wisconsin			O	O	

A - Arab countries   C - Classical period   W - Western languages
N - Near East   M - Modern period   V - Vernacular languages
S - South Asia
I - Iran
T - Turkey

X - Yes
O - No answer given on questionnaire

Instruction Formats Used by Librarians

ah- Ad hoc
ci- Course integrated
cr- Course related
fc- Full course
* - Other

*1 - Instructional seminars offered by the Readers Service of the Islamic Studies Library

*2 - Graduate Library Seminar, offered to all graduate students in various disciplines of Middle Eastern studies. Seminar meets twice per month for 1 1/2 hours.

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EVERYTHING YOU WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE NATIONAL UNION CATALOG
BUT WERE AFRAID TO ASK by Gloria Hsia (with introduction and
afterword by CF)

  Back in November 1978, Ed Jajko, then President of MELA,
reported on the year's business with LC. At the end of that report,
Jajko stated that the NUC office at LC had not been forwarding
Yale's reports of Hebrew-script cataloging to the Hebraic Section.
For his full statement, see MELA Notes, 16: 4-5. In response to
Jajko's remarks as published in MELA Notes, Gloria Hsia, Chief of
LC's Catalog Publication Division, sent MELA Notes a rebuttal.
Slightly abridged, it follows.

  "The article in the February 1979 MELA Notes about the National
Union Catalog and the activities of LC's Catalog Publication
Division contains several inaccuracies. It is appropriate, therefore,
that members of the Middle East Librarians Association be informed
of the Near East and Hebraic entries, and locations for those
entries, that are included in the printed current National Union
Catalog (Post-1955 imprints) and in the card-form Hebraic Union
Catalog, the card-form National Union Catalog of Yiddica, and the
card-form Near East National Union Catalog.

  As part of the Library of Congress' services to the libraries
of the Nation, the Catalog Publication Division is responsible
for soliciting and receiving reports to the National Union Catalog
(NUC), and for processing these reports. The Catalog Publication
Division is also responsible for the preparation and editing of
the post-1955 NUC. In its published form, the post-1955 NUC
provides a continuing record of a significant portion of the
library resources of the Nation. With LC printed cards, the post-
1955 NUC is a complete record of current LC cataloging, regardless
of imprint and regardless of language or alphabet. Full coverage
is provided for LC cataloging of Near East and Hebraic materials.
In the case of Near East materials, reports from outside libraries
of pre-1956 imprints are forwarded immediately to the African and
Middle Eastern Division. Also, outside-library reports of post-
1955 imprints--if the Library of Congress has not cataloged a par-
ticular title--are forwarded, after searching, to the African
and Middle Eastern Division for inclusion in the Near East union
catalog card file. Recent discussions with George Atiyeh and
others in the Research Services Department have confirmed that
these NE reports have been received periodically in the Near East
Section.

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The National Union Catalog and its Register of Additional Locations (RAL) also provide a published record of the added locations of both Near East and Hebraic titles. For Hebraic materials, the location symbol of the holding library is posted to LC or outside-library catalog records. Near East outside-library reports are posted as pertinent to LC catalog records. Both the Near East and Hebraic added locations are being input promptly into the automated RAL data base. (The RAL was automated in 1972, and the processing of reports is kept current.) The automated RAL is available for on-line search within LC and is published in annual book-form issues and in a Cumulative Microform Edition, which is currently available on 48x microfiche.

The initial processing of the Hebraic reports is done as follows. The Catalog Publication Division sets aside the pre-1956 imprints and forwards these to the Hebraic Section of the African and Middle Eastern Division. At the same time, those reports carrying an LC or NUC card number are set aside and sent for input to the automated RAL. The remaining cards are to be searched in the NUC Control File. At this point, however, the to-be-searched cards are duplicated and the copies are sent to the Hebraic Section. The last shipment of cards to the Hebraic Section was during the week of March 19, 1979. Another group is at present being prepared for shipment. This present accumulation of approximately seven month's Hebraic reports shows the following card totals:

1,800 (10.4%)   Pre-1956 imprints which will be forwarded
                immediately to the Hebraic Section.

5,150 (29.8%)   Added locations which will be forwarded
                for input to the automated RAL.

10,325 (59.8%) Post-1955 imprints which will be searched
                in the NUC Control File to determine
                if these are new titles or added loca-
                tions. (This group of cards will be
                copied and the copies forwarded
                immediately to Hebraic Section.)

17,275 (100%)   Total Hebraic receipts March-October 1979.

Under these procedures, two important needs are met on a regular and reasonably prompt basis: (1) post-1955 added locations are published and (2) the Hebraic Section is supplied with a notice of all the reports which are potentially new titles.

A number of years ago, a commitment was made to include in the National Union Catalog in romanized form Hebraic reports for which LC printed catalog cards were not available. Because of the difficulty of finding qualified staff to search, romanize, and edit the Hebraic NUC reports for publication, an arrearage of searching and editing has accumulated. However, a procedure for photocopying all Hebraic entries at the point of entering the searching and editing process was instituted many years ago in order that there be no delay in notifying the Hebraic Section of these reports. The photocopies of these entries are batched and forwarded to the Hebraic Section for incorporation into the card-form Hebraic and Yiddish catalogs at least once a year and usually several times a year.

Thus, the established procedures in the Catalog Publication Division provide good bibliographic coverage for Near East and Hebraic materials in the NUC and in the RAL. These procedures also assure that the card-form catalogs maintained in the Hebraic and Near East Sections should be bibliographically complete. However, this system will operate properly only if all reports submitted by cooperating libraries are directed to the Catalog Publication Division.

Several statements in the MELA Notes report of February 1979 are either incorrect or stand in need of qualification.

'... the NUC does not file Arabic-language reports from outside LC, but sends them on to [the Near East] Section for inclusion in the Near East Catalogues.'

If an NUC report from outside LC for a post-1955 monograph has an LC card number, this card will not go to the Near East Section; it will be sent for input to the automated RAL and will be published in the next RAL issue. Further, for those reports without card numbers, the Catalog Publication Division searches to determine if a particular monographic imprint has been cataloged by LC; these too, if found, go to the RAL for publication. It is the post-1955 entries which LC has not cataloged, along with all pre-1956 imprints, that are forwarded to the Near East Section. In effect, a published record of post-1955 added locations is provided and other monographic titles not covered by LC cataloging of post-1955 imprints are assured inclusion in the Near East card files.

'...for a number of years those cards have not been forwarded by the NUC office.'