MELA NOTES

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Middle East
librarians association

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MIDDLE EAST LIBRARIANS ASSOCIATION

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ALA-SAN FRANCISCO

The site alone justifies ALA's membership fees. Wind-swept hills in the heart of the city, cable cars, Chinatown, the Cannery where nothing is affordable but window-shopping a delight, Sausalito, redwoods, cheap imports to take home for the kids -- it's a wonder the conference meetings were attended at all. In the midst of 10,000 plus librarians, a few MELA members bobbed about. The International Relations Round Table and ACRL's Asian & African Section attracted some of us. One of our members belongs to RTSD's Cataloging Committee: Asian & African Materials. This lively group works on romanization tables for exotic languages, debates and advises on issues such as pinyin and non-Roman scripts in NUC, and, best of all, invites experts to talk to the rest of us. This year Pierre McKay came down and shared with us his latest thoughts on computerizing Arabic script information and how properly to eat lamb and rice at a bedou-in feast. Afterwards, about 15 of us, including our speaker, marched to a small Vietnamese retaurant and enjoyed good conversation and company over a leisurely lunch that includ-ed invisible duck. I guess it is this mix of people that ALA is all about. Thousands of meetings, tens of thousands of librarians, more exhibits than the most avid gourmand can negotiate, receptions (some free, some not), color-coded buses -- it's a good chance to forget about one's problems acquiring Iran's latest census or cataloging a corporate author that has changed its name four times in the last dec-ade. Where else can you chat about computerized Arabic display problems over invisible duck? Where else do you meet an AUC graduate who runs a one-librarian library in rural California? Her problem: how to get Hispanics into the li-brary. The summer meeting brings together Chinese catalog-ers, a-v specialists, ERA activists, adminstrators, biblio-graphic instructors, branch librarians, publishers, and salespeople of a panoply of library products and services. The mix is bewildering, a celebration of committees, programs, handouts, and resolutions. Why belong to ALA?
Because it's there, and it meets occasionally in San Francisco.

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ALA-MIDWINTER by Frances Morton

The ALA RTSD CCS Committee on Cataloging: Asian and African Materials met in Washington on February 2 and 3, 1981 at the annual Midwinter meetings. Among MELA members present were Basima Bezirgan, Patricia Myers-Hayer, Sharon Horowitz, Laurie Smith, John Eilts, Chris Filstrup, Brenda Bickett, Martha Dukas, and Frances Morton, which was an unusually high MELA attendance for ALA. The program consisted of three invited reports on the first day and a business meeting on the second day.

John Finzi, head of the Library of Congress Collection Development Office, spoke first on LC's new system for cataloging priorities, which is to be directed to high need for research for all materials, rather than the earlier system which was geared to overseas acquisitions, whose priorities varied program by program and country by country. The new system will be administered by the Selection Office for all western language serials and monographs and for other languages by delegated specialists following guidelines. The highest priority will be for Congress which is traditional and is without change, followed by U.S. federal government and state publications which have national impact, central publications of foreign governments, and research publications which are original and seminal. Defined in another way the highest category will also include the highest literary productions, followed by those without primary quality, with the lowest category being those publications which are useful to complete the collection but not of the highest value.

He then spoke on minimal level cataloging, which he said would provide access to material in LC's arrearages and would be available on tapes to be searched by title, main entry and key word. Belles lettres would be natural candidates for this kind of cataloging. For the first year all foreign language materials in priority 5 and English priority 4 (of medium research value) would go into minimal level cataloging.

During the question and answer period opinions were expressed concerning the upgrading of materials from scholarly presses, Africana, and the English-non-English distinction, which gave different priorities to materials of the same intellectual quality. Judith Nadler asked who would be responsible for minimal level cataloging. The response was that this would be handled by preliminary catalogers.

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James Agenbroad, Library of Congress systems analyst, then spoke on new developments in developing the technology for automating East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) scripts, per the LC/RLG 1979 agreement. When asked about Arabic script he said that none was going on-line in the original script now but that OCLC was thinking about the problems, the major one being producing right-to-left and left-to-right on the same line.

David Littlefield, Subject Cataloging Division, then made himself available for questions from the Committee and visitors on LC's Middle East and Islamic subject headings and classification schedules. He stated that there were three problem areas: the Islam schedules, the scattering of Islamic sciences, and the North Africa schedules. Those present felt satisfied with the current arrangement for modern Turkish authors, but expressed a need for expanding the numbers for twentieth century Persian authors. After a discussion on the use of the term "Ottoman Empire" in subject headings and the topic of empires in subject headings in general, the meeting was adjourned.

At the business meeting on February 3 the Committee approved the new Burmese romanization table submitted by the Library of Congress and heard Ben Tucker, Chief, Descriptive Cataloging Policy of the Library of Congress, answer questions about AACR 2.

The issue of a change or modification in AACR 2 with respect to the cataloging of microform reproductions of previously published materials was again raised at the RTSD CCS Committee on Cataloging: Description and Access, and again voted down.

APPLICATION OF ISBD (M) TO ARABIC WORKS by Nabila Gomaa

Background

When the first standard English edition of ISBD(M) appeared in April 1974, the early applications of it to

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Arabic Works took place in different libraries and agen-
cies; by the end of the same year, at least several hundred
entries were prepared for Arabic books according to ISBD (M).
Steady application, however, was not by any Arab agency or
library, but rather by the Library of Congress. Since the
preferred language and alphabet in the U.S. are English and
Roman script, both of which differ in some facets from the
Arabic language and alphabet, it was expected that certain
aspects of LC application would be denied by the Arab agen-
cies and libraries. In general, LC application, though it
may be accepted by Arab national agencies as far as areas
1,2, and 3 (title and authorship statement; edition; and im-
print) are concerned with a few exceptions, LC application
in areas 4 an 6 (collation; and notes) is completely denied
by those agencies. As to areas 5 and 7 (series, and ISBN),
LC application is not denied completely, but still needs
some modification in order to be accepted by the Arab agencies.

Arab application of ISBD (M) to Arabic books is not yet
a steady one, for a variety of reasons, not the least of
which is that both ISBD (M) editions of 1974 and 1978 are
full of European-biased backgrounds and instructions. This
is particularly true with the English language and Roman
alphabet. That bias, combined with limited human resources
able to work with ISBD in any form, lack of rules, interpre-
tations and working manuals designed particularly for ISBD
use, and general low standard technical functions in most
Arab libraries, creates serious obstacles against the faith-
ful efforts sponsored by the Arab League Education, Culture,
and Science Organization (ALECSO) for promotion of ISBD (M)
use in Arab countries. Working with ALECSO from the very
beginning for this purpose, Dr. Saad M. El-Hagrassy realized
in 1978 that it was imperative to have an empirical study
of the whole situation, i.e., the internal characteristics
of the ISBD (M), particularly its English-biased mode;
scattered Arab applications of ISBD (M), whether the IFLA
Version or the Anglo-American version in AACR chapter 6;
non-Arabic application by LC from September 1974 through
December 1980. This problem was the topic of my research
for the M.L.S. in the University of Cairo, under Dr. Hagrassy's
supervision. I have completed the dissertation in Arabic
and now present these background notes and suggestions in
English.

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Starting with the academic year 1974-1975, the Depart-
ment of Library and Information Sciences in the University
of Cairo translated the ISBD(M) text into Arabic and used
it for the graduate and undergraduate courses of descriptive
cataloging. Other departments in Arab universities of Iraq,
Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Libya are very willing to teach it
as soon as they have staff members qualified for this task.
At any rate, the European-biased ISBD(M) text of 1974 and
1978 is recognized here as a discouragement factor for both
teaching and application of this international code. Newly
graduated Arab librarians have mainly a theoretical concept
of the ISBD(M) with very limited practice.

As to ISBD(M) use, I have found some very important
results concerning Arab applications. Only smaller national
libraries of Arab countries started some years ago to use
ISBD(M) in their cataloging, with a very limited success, due
to a shortage of qualified staff, lack of experience, and
the European-biased mode of the present ISBD(M) conventions.
It seems that the largest Arab national Libraries, like
those of Iraq and Egypt, knowing the inherent obstacles men-
tioned above, have preferred to wait for a more appropriate
time to start. This is actually the case with the Egyptian
National Library whose collections exceeded one million vol-
umes some years ago, and whose printed National Bibliography
is the oldest and by itself covers 50% of all Arab publica-
tions. It took the ENL more than five years to get itself
ready for the use of ISBD(M) in cataloging. Being the senior
consultant to the ENL since May 1980, Dr. El-Hagrassy plans
to use ISBD(M) as of January 1, 1981 in both the Library's
card catalogs and the printed National Bibliography.

About non-Arab application, i.e., the Library of Con-
gress, the findings indicate the highest degree of success
measured by stability and professional understanding of the
ISBD(M) rules and conventions. This does not mean, however,
that LC application should be considered the best pattern
for the use of ISBD(M) in Arabic monographs. As a matter of
fact, LC application deviates little by little from the
ideal pattern. I give here only one example to prove my
claim. For the first four or five years, LC used to trans-
cribe for the "At head of title" note, the quoted phrase in
Arabic script as it appears in the work itself. Since 1979

or perhaps earlier, LC romanizes the quoted phrase for this
note, thus confusing the user who may think that the quoted
phrase is printed on the work in a romanized form too. In
general, LC has more and more over-romanized the Arabic parts
of the description, assuming that gradually this is the easy,
pragmatic way to execute its policy concerning the complete
computerization of all bibliographic records in the library.

Suggestions

In reference to the paragraph above, it has become very
clear that the gulf between the national application of
ISBD(M) conventions and the non-national application to the
same works is gradually widened by the over-use of European-
biased conventions inherent in the ISBD(M). If such process
continues without some controlling rules, ISBD(M) could lose
completely its international character as far as applications
are concerned. It is suggested, therefore, that the re-
vised edition of 1983 include certain general instructions
(i.e. Rule 0.6) to limit the freedom given to bibliographic
agencies and libraries, in order to protect ISBD(M)'s
integrity during application. One example for such limited
freedom would be to treat the quoted phrase for the "At head
of title" note as the series title which is transcribed in
its own script. Romanization of that may be an additional
item in the description but not a substitute.

Rule (0.3.2) concerning "outline of the ISBD(M)" ex-
plains prescribed punctuations whose use is familiar mainly
in the roman-alphabet languages. Those punctuations in
other languages running from right to left may have changed
their positions, particularly the question mark, comma, and
semicolon which have the following positions in Arabic
(؟ ، ؛). It is suggested, therefore, that in Rule (0.3.2)
an additional phrase would indicate that such prescribed
punctuations are used in accordance with their positions in
the language of the work described.

Rule (0.8) concerning the necessity of using capital
form for the initial letters of the first words in all areas
in addition to the first letter of "General material desig-
nation" again addresses itself to those languages having both

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forms, capital and small. Arabic and other languages do not
have dual formats of letters. It is suggested, therefore,
that the Rule (0.8) be rephrased to avoid such biased-address-
ed conventions.

Rule (5.1.2.4) concerning treatment of pages and leaves
when lettered instead of numbered does not take into consid-
eration the very possible case when some are lettered and
others are numbered, each group an independent sequence. It
is suggested, therefore, that Rule (5.1.2.4) include a pre-
scription for such cases and some examples for the treatment.

Rule (8.1.4) concerning the incorrect ISBN requires
finding correct ISBN recorded in the description, but it does
not give any instruction when the correct ISBN is impossible
to get, which is the case in many works printed in develop-
ing countries. It is suggested, therefore, that when an in-
correct ISBN is not easy to get, ignore this item in the
description.

According to a 1979 statement by the IFLA Standing
Committee on Cataloging, a 'manual of annotated ISBD examples"
will be prepared with C.P. Ravilious overall editor. It is
my suggestion that certain Arabic examples be included in
that manual. To avoid European-biased application of ISBD
to Arabic examples, it is essential that such examples be
prepared and/or revised by one of the major Arab national
libraries with the assistance of a qualified faculty member
in a department of library and information science.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL OF KURDISH LITERATURE by Wolfgang Behn

Western ideas and concepts have reached even the most
isolated segments of the people in the Middle East. The
Kurds, who until quite recently have been living on the
fringes of modern Middle East society, have become increas-
ingly exposed to modern western nationalism. Of course, the
origins of the Kurds' aspirations for national independence
date back to the nineteenth century. Contemporary Kurdish
hope reached its height when in the Treaty of Sevres (1920)
provision was made for an autonomous Kurdistan. However,

in the Treaty of Lausanne (1924), which superseded the Treaty
of Sevres, no mention was made of this promise.

The contemporary Kurdish minorities in Iraq, Iran, Tur-
key, and Syria profit from the events surrounding the short-
lived Mahabad Republic of 1945/46 and from the importance of
the oilfields in the Kurdish regions of northern Iraq. The
problem of the Kurds is difficult in so far as they are dis-
persed over five countries. Their deep attachment to their
own language and customs makes it more natural to look to
reunion with their fellow Kurds in the other countries than
to accept an undefined minority status in any particular
country. The Kurds thus present a problem for the respective
governments mainly because of the regimes' lack of respect
for Kurdish traditions.

There is considerable literature on what is generally
referred to as the Kurdish question. However, publishing
is restricted to the Soviet Union (mainly in Cyrillic charac-
ters) and Iraq (in the Arabic alphabet). Since the existence
of the Kurds is denied in Turkey, no Kurdish literature
emanates from Turkish printing presses. For similar reasons
no Kurdish printing was tolerated in Iran under the Pahlavis.
The few text editions published in Tabriz are a different
genre altogether. How far the appearance of Kurdish printing
in revolutionary Iran is a manifestation of a real change
of attitude remains to be seen.

Access to the most recent literature is through general
works like J.D. Pearson's Quarterly index islamicus and the
Library of Congress' Subject catalog. There are several
retrospective bibliographies of Kurdish publications; they
are listed here in chronological order.

ᶜAlā' al-Dīn Sajjādī, Mēzhūy adabī Kurdī (Baghdad, 1952)
is more of a history of Kurdish literature than a bibliog-
raphy, particularly as it lacks an index. Some three hun-
dred Kurdish works published anywhere are contained in
Kitēbkhānay Kurdī by Muṣṭafā Narīmān (Kirkuk, 1960); it
cites mainly literary texts and translations, but some re-
ligious and ethnographic works are included. Zh. S. Musaelīān,
Bibliografiīa po kurdoveniīu (Moscow, 1963), lists mono-
graphs and periodical articles in a classified arrangement,
subdivided chronologically; more than half of the 2,768
entries represent Russian language material. The comprehen-

sive ISK's Kurdish bibliography edited by Silvio van Rooy
and Kees Tamboer (Amsterdam, International Society Kurdistan,
1968, 2 vols.), though classified, is not exactly practical
on account of the extremely broad subject headings. For
example, under the heading IRAN/Kurds some 400 references
published up to 1946 are listed, without further sub-divi-
sions. This writer's The Kurds in Iran: a selected and an-
notated bibliography (London, 1977) continues where the pre-
ceding work left off, filling the gap between 1966 and 1975
as far as monographs are concerned. A complementary work
is Elizabeth E. Lytle's Bibliography of the Kurds, Kurdistan,
and the Kurdish question (Monticello, Ill., 1977. Exchange
bibliography 1301), citing predominantly periodical articles
of serials not included in J.D. Pearson's Index islamicus.
Whereas half the titles in The Kurds in Iran are in non-wes-
tern languages, Lytle's work covers almost exclusively
western language material. The latest publication is
Bibliyūghrāfiyā al-kutub al-Kurdīyah, 1787-1975 by Muṣṭafā
Sayyid Aḥmad Narīmān (Baghdad, 1977), listing 1,254 items
arranged chronologically according to the years of the Chris-
tian era. It has a Kurdish as well as Arabic introduction.
A classified list of the Kurdish books in the Central Li-
brary of the University of Sulaimaniyya is entitled
Līstay bibliyōgrāfiyāy kitēba Kurdiyakānī kitēbkhānay Zānkōy
Silēmanī (Sulaymānīyah, 1977, v. 1-). The most recent pub-
lication is ᶜUmar Maᶜrūf al-Barzanjī's Lēkōlīnawa bibliyō-
grāfiyāy chīrōki Kurdī, 1925-1969 (Baghdad, 1978), contain-
ing a bibliography of Kurdish fiction arranged by title.

Material published by the Kurdish exiles in the West
is included in the section on minorities in two of this
writer's annotated bibliographies: The Iranian opposition
in exile (Wiesbaden, 1979) and Islamic revolution or revo-
lutionary Islam in Iran (Berlin, 1980).

Hasan Sōrān completed his bibliography Kitēbkhānay Sōrān
1979 in London. It is supposed to be published in Baghdad,
but so far its publication has remained a promise.

Looking at these bibliographies it is apparent that
the secondary literature is adequately covered. Biblio-
graphic control of the literature in Kurdish remains unsatis-
factory. Most of the reference works are either poorly or-
ganized (Narīmān) or outright misleading (Sōrān). Very few
are arranged analytically. Frequently western and Russian

titles have been translated freely into Kurdish in order to
accommodate them in an Arabic bibliographical straight-jacket.
If these works are indexed at all, the author index has to
be used with ingenuity as western writers are sometimes en-
tered under their forenames without any reference from their
family names. A desideratum of high priority is a reliable,
comprehensive bibliography of Kurdish literature.

REPORT ON THE ARABIC LANGUAGE IN COMPUTERS SYMPOSIUM
by Selden Deemer*

The International Symposium for Standardization of
Codes, Character Sets and Keyboards for the Arabic Language
in Computers was held in Riyadh 1-4 June 1980 under the
sponsorship of the Saudi Arabian Standards Organization.

Uniform standards do not exist for the use of the
Arabic script in computers. Areas of possible standardiza-
tion include:

> Definition of Arabic script character set(s)
> Coding for internal (binary) representation
> External representation of internal codes through
>   printed or visual display
> Data transmission between computers
> Keyboard layouts

Participants agreed that the minimum character set
needed to represent the Arabic language includes:

> 28 alphabetic characters: ي – ا
> 3 additional characters: ة ‹ى ‹ء

Additional diacritical marks are needed to represent
Arabic fully, although they may not be used in all situa-
tions. Additional characters are required for other lan-
guages (such as Persian, Urdu, etc.) which use the Arabic
script. Participants did not agree on extension of the
basic Arabic character set to support languages other than
Arabic.

> *This report is taken from a memorandum from Deemer to
> University of Petroleum and Minerals library staff. -ed.

For use in computers, Arabic (and Roman) script charac-
ters are represented internally as binary codes. For trans-
mission of coded data between computers, codes should be
standardized. Earlier efforts at coding for Arabic frequent-
ly used more than one code per character in order to repre-
sent variant shapes (ع , ﻌ , ﻊ , ﻋ). The use of "context
analysis" permits the appropriate shape to be determined
from context. Participants generally agreed that character
values (i.e., عـن) should be represented internally on a
one to one basis, except for hamza (ء). This character is
represented by 4 different codes, depending on its seat.
Although context analysis could be used to determine the
proper seat for a uniquely coded hamza, this is possible
only with full and correct vowel signs (حركات), which may
not be present in all uses. Participants agreed to com-
promise the principle of one character = one code in this
case. The CODAR-U 7-bit code was recommended for <u>evaluation</u>
as a suitable standard for the Arabic script character set.
Testing of CODAR-U compatible equipment will take place
between now and September, when recommendations should be
made to the ALESCO conference to be held in Amman.

Different media and uses may require different approach-
es to display of Arabic script text, whether in CRT,
matrix-printed, typewritten, or cold-type printed form.
Therefore, different numbers of character styles and shapes
may be necessary to produce acceptable results. No stan-
dards were proposed in this area.

Existing keyboards are based on typewriters, which
require many keys and variant shapes to represent the full
Arabic character set. Participants agreed that further
research is needed to produce a more efficient keyboard for
terminal use and possibly for typewriters as well. Two
main areas exist for improvement:

1. Reduction of the number of keys so that 1 key =
   1 character.
2. Rearrangement of keys to improve keystroking
   efficiency.

Research already conducted suggests that improvements

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of as much as 200% in typing efficiency may be possible.

    The results of this symposium are encouraging for the
UPM Library automation effort. Many problems associated with
using the Arabic script in a computer environment were re-
vealed during the symposium, and solutions were found for
at least some of them. By the time we are ready to imple-
ment Arabic script within DOBIS/LIBIS, a 7-bit code for
representation of an Arabic script character set should
have been adopted. This can form the basis for developing
a MARC format for the exchange of bibliographic information
for Arabic script materials.

    The official resolution of the Symposium reads:

    It is resolved:

    that in recognition of the paramount importance in
homogenizing the use of the Arabic language in informatics
among the Arab nation, and particularly in respect to the
requirement of compatibility of hardware, software and com-
munication codes, that the coding table of CODAR-U be
adopted as a working basis proposal for a standard; taking
into consideration that font and graphic symbols are not
part of this standard;

    the method of contextual analysis that permits the
display and/or printing of Arabic in its correct and desir-
able forms is strongly recommended;

    provision is made here-to-fore to review the evolution,
acceptability and performance of the CODAR-U standard with
a view to updating it as technology and/or requirements
change;

    SASO, like any other Arab national standardization
organization, is empowered to recommend to ALESCO and ASMO
any modification to the CODAR-U scheme wherever desirable,
while respecting the general framework of a unified Arabic
code.

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FIRST CONFERENCE OF SAUDI LIBRARIANS
by Ahmad Ashfaq and Simon Samoeil*

The first conference of Saudi Librarians, held at the
University of Riyadh, may justifiably be termed an event of
historical importance for the library profession in the
Kingdom. It is the first serious attempt by the profession
to make its existence felt by educational institutions and
and the personnel from school, public, special, government,
and university libraries as well as specialized information
centers like the FININFO (Financial Information Service)
and the SANCST (Saudi Arabian National Center for Science
and Technology). The echo could even be felt in the Direc-
torate of Civil Services whose representative participated
as an observer and was positively responsive when a cadre
for librarians came up for discussion.

After the inauguration, the participants were split
into different working groups each addressed to a special
set of problems, namely:

1.　Manpower problems

2.　Interlibrary cooperation in the sphere of technic-
al services

3.　Public libraries in the Kingdom

4.　Cooperation with international library and
documentation institutions and organizations

5.　Library automation

1.　The feeling was widely shared by delegates that
libraries in the Kingdom, whether university, public, school
or special, are faced with an acute shortage of trained Saudi
librarians. Perhaps as a sequel to this situation, most of
the libraries, especially the school, public, government and
special libraries, are not adequately equipped. In a number
of cases libraries are being looked after by persons without
professional qualification or training. Middle level,
trained librarians are almost non-existent.

*This report first appeared in University of Petroleum
& Minerals' Library Scene, 5:2 (August 1980). It has
been edited slightly for MELA Notes. -ed.

There are two library schools in the Kingdom - one at King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah and the other at Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud University in Riyadh which provide professional education to Saudi Secondary School graduates. In addition, the Institute of Public Administration in Riyadh conducts short-term in-service training courses for Saudi librarians. However, for various reasons, the potential of these three schools is not being exploited fully.

2.   The state of inter-library cooperation in the field of technical services was discussed at length. While the problem was not serious vis-a-vis the English collections of these libraries, since they were following either Dewey Decimal or Library of Congress schemes (with the majority using the Dewey Decimal classification) and the AACR (Anglo-American Cataloging Rules) with Library of Congress or Sears list of Subject headings for cataloging, these systems fell far short of their goal in tackling problems concerning Arabic Collections and Islamic subjects, more specifically, classification of Islamic subjects, derivation of subject headings in Arabic, and the rendering of Arab authors' names, both medieval and modern. Feedback was invited on the Arabic List of Subject Headings compiled by the University of Riyadh Library. An effort will be made to study systems used by the leading libraries in the Arab world.

3.   From discussions that took place it was evident that the Kingdom would soon have a chain of public libraries. The existing ones are in bad shape both staff and collection-wise, it was noted. A committee has been appointed to study the problems of public libraries especially in regard to collection development policies, staffing, public services, and the ways they could reach out to the community.

4.   It was felt that to keep abreast of the latest techniques and developments in the field, cooperation and regular communication with international organizations and institutions in the sphere of library, information, and documentation, e.g., FID (International Federation of Documentation), IFLA (International Federation of Library Associations), etc., was imperative.

5.   Automation of library operations was a subject that fascinated a majority of participants, especially

from university libraries. However, the diverse and
varied problems that different libraries face make a common
approach somewhat difficult. Unlike the UPM Library some
libraries like those of Riyadh and King Abdul Aziz Univer-
sity have the majority of their holdings in Arabic. They
need a system that can integrate or handle separately their
Arabic and English collections. A feasibility study was
deemed desirable on the subject. There was, however,
unanimity on bringing library operations under a unified
system to be governed by a standard set of rules before
they could be welded into a chain of automated libraries
cooperating in the spheres of acquisitions, inter-library
lending, processing, etc. It is high time for a decision
on unification of systems since it is easier to switch
over from one system to another while collections
are relatively small than at a time when holdings grow large
enough to thwart such a proposition.

Mr. Abdulrahman A. Mazi, Director of the SANCST Infor-
mation System read a very informative and interesting paper
on the genesis of the SANCST Information Center. His
discussion concentrated on the role of SANCST Information
system in the development, application and transfer of infor-
mation technology, tracing its history from the First De-
velopment Plan through the present. He also highlighted
the role universities and research institutions had to play
in this process and the benefits that would eventually accrue
to them through cooperation. He made special mention, with
appreciation, of the cooperation the UPM Library has extend-
ed to the Center in many ways, specifically the prompt supply
at SANCST's initiative of photocopies of material needed
by researchers in various universities and research centers
of the Kingdom. He believed it augurs well for interlibrary
cooperation and resource sharing activities in the Kingdom.

Of historic significance is the decision of the Confer-
ence to form a library association in the Kingdom which
would give an impetus and serve as a nucleus for the pro-
motion and development of library services in the King-
dom. The publication of a library journal was also promoted.

It was also decided that urgent measures should be
taken to resuscitate the National Library in order that it
may play its rightful role as do national libraries else-

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where in the world. Especially, there was stressed the
publication of a national bibliography without which
bibliographical control over the intellectual output of the
nation is inconceivable. In this context a deposit law
for the Kingdom was also discussed. A committee has been
appointed to look into the problems connected with the
National Library.

There are valuable collections of manuscripts found in
university, public and private libraries in the Kingdom that
bear a testimony to the rich social, cultural, and scien-
tific heritage of the Arab Islamic civilization. A large
number of these are yet to be identified. Those that have
already been have not received the care and attention they
deserve. It was suggested that adequate steps be taken to
identify, collate, and preserve these collections using the
latest methods in vogue for their storage, preservation,
and cataloging. A descriptive union catalog of all manu-
scripts is to be compiled and efforts will be made to en-
courage private owners to donate their collections to
institutions that have sufficient human and financial re-
sources to take care of the manuscripts. Librarians should
be sent abroad to get special training in the field.

In our estimation this Conference has been both highly
instructive and educative and a unique opportunity for us to
witness an epoch-making event from a very close angle. It
gave us an opportunity to meet Saudi librarians from across
the Kingdom invited from different types of libraries and
to acquire a feeling of the diverse problems facing librar-
ies and the library profession in the Kingdom. It enabled
us to make personal friends so as to harness this acquain-
tance for more meaningful institutional cooperation.

COLLATION

The following report comes to us from Wolfgang Behn.

The 3rd International Conference of the Middle East
Libraries Committee was held at the Staatsbibliothek
Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, April 6-9, 1981. The
subject of the conference was twofold: the contribution
of European orientalists to Middle Eastern and Islamic

studies, and European library collections in Middle Eastern
and Islamic studies.

A large part of the conference was devoted to the study
of Islamicists. In the final session there was a frank
discussion of the performance of the British and German
centres of excellency. There was agreement that the annual
acquisition of merely three thousand Islamic titles by the
British Library or the University of Tübingen Library fell
far short of the performance of the Library of Congress.
In view of this situation there were suggestions of re-
directing the acquisition policy of the national libraries.
But no agreement could be reached as to what sacrifices
would guarantee a comprehensive coverage in the individual
countries. In particular, the delegates failed to agree on
whether it is advisable for the national libraries to ac-
quire more marginal and ephemeral material at the expense of
the standard works.

There was also a lengthy discussion of the problem of
dealing with backlogs caused by shared cataloging projects.

The papers relating to Middle Eastern library collections
in Europe are to form part of a handbook to be published by
MELCOM early in 1982. The biographical papers will also be
published at some future date.

At the conclusion of the conference Madame Geneviève
Jolly of the Société Asiatique (3, rue Mazarine, Paris 6e)
agreed to host the fourth International MELCOM conference
to be held in Paris, April 21-23, 1982.

NEWS OF MEMBERS

WOLFGANG BEHN has published two new works: 1) Islamic re-
volution or revolutionary Islam in Iran: a selected and an-
notated bibliography of political publications from the over-
throw of the shah until his death. Berlin: Adiyok, 1981.
2) The dissident press of revolutionary Iran up to 1359
(March 1981): selected periodicals with bibliographic de-
scription. Berlin: W. Behn, 1981. The latter consists of
8 microfilm reels of a major collection of revolutionary
literature and is available from Herr Behn.

MELA NOTES 23, May, 1981

THREE MEMBERS have contributions to the first issue of
Mundus Arabicus, a new annual devoted to Arabic literature.
Mundus Arabicus debuts with a volume on mahjar writers.
Fawzi Abdulrazak and Francine McNulty have prepared biblio-
graphies of works in Arabic and western languages respec-
tively. George Atiyeh has contributed a study of Shukrī
al-Khūrī's Finyānūs. Copies are available from Dar Mahjar,
P.O. Box 56, Cambridge, MA. 02238. Price is $22.00 plus
postage for individuals; $30.00 plus postage for insti-
tutions. No personal checks accepted.

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