

45 Annual Conference | 45 colloque annuel

**Hybrid Conference**  
**London, May 14-17, 2024**



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Muteferriqa

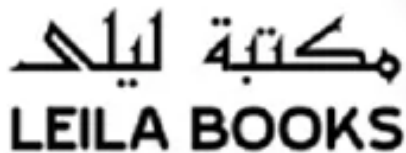


المنظومة  
ALMANDUMAH  
الرواد في قواعد المعلومات العربية

  
مكتبة قطر الوطنية  
Qatar National Library

east view  
INFORMATION SERVICES

  
المنهل  
ALMANHAL  
by Kezana

مكتبة ليلا  
LEILA BOOKS

De Gruyter Brill



The Institute of Ismaili Studies



THE AGA KHAN UNIVERSITY

(International) in the United Kingdom

Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations

# AGA KHAN LIBRARY

LONDON

The Aga Khan Library emerged from a collaboration between The Institute of Ismaili Studies (IIS) and The Aga Khan University's Institute for the Study of Muslim Civilisations (AKU-ISMC). The concept took shape in 2008 when these two institutes relocated to a shared building in central London.

Initially, each institute maintained separate libraries. However, in 2014, they decided to merge their services and combine their invaluable collections related to Islamic studies. This newly integrated library was informally referred to as the Joint IIS-ISMC Library.

In 2018, the joint library officially opened its doors to the public as the Aga Khan Library, situated within the newly constructed Aga Khan Centre. Boasting over 54,000 volumes and cutting-edge facilities, the library serves the academic community by providing comprehensive resources for researching diverse topics in Islamic studies.

The Aga Khan Library houses Europe's largest collection dedicated to the study of Ismaili communities, their historical context, and their beliefs. Additionally, it offers an extensive array of materials on Shia Islam, Quranic literature, and other fundamental aspects of Islamic studies. These collections are invaluable for understanding the past and present development of Muslim civilizations, cultural production, and the global situation of Muslim diasporas.



MELCom, the Middle Eastern Libraries Committee, was established in the United Kingdom in the late 1960s to promote all aspects of Middle Eastern librarianship, book collecting, the book trade and publishing.

Through international connections, MELCom held its inaugural joint conference with French colleagues in Aix-en-Provence, France, in 1979—a milestone that paved the way for subsequent gatherings. Following a second conference outside the UK at Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin in 1981, the feasibility and benefits of organising an annual international conference became evident.

MELCom fostered a robust exchange of ideas related to librarianship and book research within a welcoming and professional atmosphere, complemented by informal activities and scholarly exploration. The diverse scope of MELCom International's activities eventually led to its independent operation alongside MELCom UK.

Since 1993, MELCom International has been operating independently of MELCOM UK, maintaining its own Constitution to provide a legal framework for its endeavours.

## Day 1 - Morning

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May - Atrium Conference Room, Aga Khan Centre

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**09:00 - 10:00** Registration and Refreshments

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Opening and Welcome

- **Walid Ghali**, Head Librarian, Aga Khan Library
  - 10:00 - 10:30** - **Zayn Kassam**, Director, The Institute of Ismaili Studies
  - **Andreas Drechsler**, President, MELCom International
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### Session 1: Insights from UK Libraries (20-minute papers + Q&A)

Moderator: **Lydia Wright**

1. *Arabic Collections in the British Library at 50: Reviewing Change and Looking to the Future*  
**Debbie Cox**, Lead Curator, Contemporary British & Irish Publications, British Library, UK
- 10:30 - 12:00** 2. *Archiving the Archive: Integrating the Der-Khachadourian Library into the British Library*  
**Michael Erdman**, Head of Middle East and Central Asia Department, British Library, UK
3. *The Collection of Kuwait Library at Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies*  
**Wassilena Sekulova**, Librarian, Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, Oxford, UK

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### Sponsor Presentation 1

**12:00 - 12:30** *Muteferriqa: Ottoman and Turkish Studies Discovery Portal*  
**Ceyhan Ozan**, Muteferriqa Product Manager, Miletos INC

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**12:30 - 13:30** Lunch Break - sponsored by **Muteferriqa**

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## Day 1 - Afternoon

Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> May - Atrium Conference Room, Aga Khan Centre

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### Session 2: Preservation (20-minute papers + Q&A)

Moderator: **Wassilena Sekulova**

- 13:30 - 15:00**
1. *Himaya: Qatar National Library's Programme to Combat Trafficking of Documentary Heritage in the MENA Region*  
**Huism Tan**, Executive Director, Qatar National Library, Qatar
  2. *The Possession System and its Impact on Combating Illicit Trafficking of Documentary Heritage in Iraq* **Online**  
**Ahmed Kareem Alwan**, General Director, Iraqi Manuscripts House
  3. *Intersection of Digital Technology and Cultural Heritage Preservation in Algeria*  
**Abir Chorfa**, Program Director, Antiquities Coalition's projects in Algeria

### Sponsor Presentation 2

*Noor Digital libraries*

**Ali Sadig**, Managing Director, Noorsoft Europe Service

**15:00-15:45**

### Sponsor Presentation 3

*Al-Mandumah Arabic Databases*

**Musaed Altayyar**, Executive Manager, Dar al-Mandumah

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**15:45 - 16:15** Refreshments - sponsored by **Dar al-Mandumah**

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**16:15 - 17:30** Aga Khan Library and AKC Gardens Tour

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**17:30 - 19:00** Canape Reception - sponsored by **Aga Khan Library**

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## Day 2 - Parallel Sessions. Stream A - Morning

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May – Atrium Conference Room, Aga Khan Centre

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09:30 - 10:00 Refreshments

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### Session 3A: History of Libraries (20-minute papers + Q&A)

Moderator: **Arnoud Vrolijk**

- 10:00 - 11:00
1. *On the Last Train to Istanbul: the Fate of Jewish Librarians at the Berlin State Library during the Nazi Era*  
**Christoph Rauch**, Head of Oriental Department,  
Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, Germany
  2. *The National Library of Baghdad - a Symbol of National and Cultural Identity: an Outsider Perspective*  
**Hans-Peter Pökel**, Head Librarian, German Orient Institute  
Beirut, Lebanon
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11:00 - 11:30 Refreshments

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### Session 4A: Rare Books (20-minute papers + Q&A)

Moderator: **Christoph Rauch**

- 11:30 - 13:00
1. *Illustrated Persian Lithographs - Managing a Researcher's Legacy*  
**Mirja Weinmann**, Librarian for Turkic Languages and Persian, Bavarian State Library, Germany
  2. *Boğaziçi University Library Rare Books Collection: from Past to Present* **Online**  
**Sevgi Atila Cünüş**, Rare Books and Historical Archives Librarian, Boğaziçi University, Türkiye
  3. *Arabic Books Printed in the 18th Century in Moldavia, Wallachia, and Greater Syria. New Research Outcomes*  
**Ioana Feodorov**, Principal Investigator, ERC TYPARABIC Project, Institute for South-East European Studies, Romanian Academy, Romania
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13:00 - 14:00 Lunch Break

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## Day 2 - Parallel Sessions. Stream A - Afternoon

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May - Atrium Conference Room, Aga Khan Centre

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**Session 5A: Outreach and Collection Interpretation** (20-minute papers + Q&A)

Moderator: **Waseem Farooq**

1. *Learnings from the Muslims in Canada: Archives and Their Relevance on the Study of Islam*

**Aly Rattansi**, Archivist/Librarian, Muslims in Canada Archives, University of Toronto, Canada

**14:00 - 15:30**

2. *So You Want to Be a Librarian? On Slaying Ghouls and Beating the Odds*

**Tine Lavent**, Head Librarian, Netherlands-Flemish Institute in Cairo, Egypt

3. *Towards Reparative Collecting & Digitization: A Community Symposium and Training Program*

**Dale Correa**, Middle Eastern Studies Librarian & History Coordinator, University of Texas at Austin, USA

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**15:30 - 16:00** Refreshments - sponsored by **Muteferriga**

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Atrium Conference Room (1<sup>st</sup> floor)

### **Sponsor Presentation 4**

*New and Featured Resources and Services for Middle East Studies*

**Ariane Rückebeil**, Account Manager Europe, East View Inc

**16:00 - 16:45**

### **Sponsor Presentation 5**

*Discover Al Manhal, the Leading Platform for Islamic and Middle East Studies*

**Rany Al Baghdadi**, Chief Revenue & Strategy Officer, Kezana

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**16:45 - 17:00** Refreshments

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**17:00 - 18:00** Aga Khan Library and AKC Gardens Tour

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**Day 2 - Parallel Sessions. Stream B - Morning**  
Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May - **Room 220** (2<sup>nd</sup> floor) Aga Khan Centre

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**09:30 - 10:00** Refreshments

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**Session 3B: Introducing Library Collections** (20-minute papers + Q&A)

Moderator: **Shah Hussain**

- 10:00 - 11:00**
1. *Middle Eastern Library in Leiden*  
**Anita Keizers** and **Mariëtte Keuken**, Subject Librarians,  
Leiden University Libraries, the Netherlands
  2. *The Bibliotheca Afghanica Collection at the Basel University Library*  
**Joël Laszlo**, Liaison Librarian, University Library, University  
Basel, Switzerland
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**11:00 - 11:30** Refreshments

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**Session 4B: Manuscripts** (20-minute papers + Q&A)

Moderator: **Anne-Sylvie Cathelineau**

- 11:30 - 13:00**
1. *Masterpieces of Persian Calligraphy in British Library Manuscripts* **Online**  
**Muhammad Isa Waley**, Retired Curator for Persian and  
Turkish, British Library, UK
  2. *The Collection of Oriental Manuscripts of the University of Naples L'Orientale: State of the Art and Current Projects*  
**Antonella Muratgia**, Head Librarian and **Francesca Bellino**,  
Professor for Arabic Language and Literature, University of  
Naples L'Orientale, Italy
  3. *The Turkish and Bosnian Mevlid Manuscripts and Printed Copies in Arabic, Latin and Cyrillic Scripts and Their Recitations in Bosnian Mevlid Celebrations*  
**Fatima Kadić**, Head Librarian, Faculty of Islamic Studies,  
University of Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina
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**13:00 - 14:00** Lunch Break

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**Day 2 - Parallel Sessions. Stream B - Afternoon**  
Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May - **Room 220** (2<sup>nd</sup> floor) Aga Khan Centre

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**Session 5B: Ottoman Legacy** (20-minute papers + Q&A)

Moderator: **Michael Erdman**

- 14:00 - 15:30**
1. *The Library of Higher School of Engineering (Mühendis Mekteb-i Âlîsi) in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic (1909-1944)*  
**U. Duygu Aysal Cin**, Lecturer at Istanbul Technical University, Department of Sociology, Türkiye
  2. *Newly Discovered Ottoman Turkish Manuscripts Authored by Famous Ottoman Physicians* **Online**  
**Ani Avetisyan**, Researcher, Matenadaran-Research Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, Armenia
  3. *History of the Manastır Kütüphanesi in Light of Stamps and Records Found in the Oriental Manuscripts of the NUL "St. Clement of Ohrid" in Skopje*  
**Marijana Kavčić**, Senior Librarian in Oriental Collections, National and University Library "St. Clement of Ohrid" - Skopje, North Macedonia
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**15:30 - 16:00** Refreshments - sponsored by **Muteferriqa**

Atrium Conference Room (1<sup>st</sup> floor)

**Sponsor Presentation 4**

*New and Featured Resources and Services for Middle East Studies*

**Ariane Rückebeil**, Account Manager Europe, East View Inc

**16:00 - 16:45**

**Sponsor Presentation 5**

*Discover Al Manhal, the leading platform for Islamic and Middle East Studies*

**Rany Al Baghdadi**, Chief Revenue & Strategy Officer, Kezana

**16:45 - 17:00** Refreshments

**17:00 - 18:00** Aga Khan Library and AKC Gardens Tour

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## Day 3 - Morning

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May - Atrium Conference Room, Aga Khan Centre

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09:00-09:30 Refreshments

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**Session 6: Collection Development and Cataloguing** (20-minute papers + Q&A)

Moderator: **Walid Ghali**

1. *Developing Qatar National Library Subject Headings (QNLSH): Mechanisms and Challenges*  
**Iman Weheba**, Senior Cataloguing Librarian, Qatar National Library, Qatar

09:30-11:00

2. *The Library of Congress Cairo Overseas Office: Opportunities and Challenges in Cooperative Acquisitions*  
**Rustin Zarkar**, Field Director, Library of Congress, Cairo Overseas Office, Egypt
3. *The Significance of Transliteration in Enhancing Accessibility and Exchange of Arabic Research Data **Online***  
**Mohamed Elzalabany**, Cataloguing Librarian, Library of Congress, Cairo Overseas Office, Egypt

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### Sponsor Presentation 6

11:00-11:30

*Lost in Translation? The Future of Disseminating Scholarship in Arabic, Persian and Other Languages*

**Nicolette van der Hoek** Senior Acquisitions Editor Middle East, Islam and African Studies, De Gruyter Brill

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11:30-11:45 Refreshments

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**Panel discussion: AI in Libraries and Librarians in Digital Humanities**

Moderator: **Andreas Dreschsler**

11:45 - 12:45

- **Yasmin Faghihi**, Head of Near and Middle Eastern Department, Cambridge University Library, UK
- **Magda El-Sherbini**, Professor and Middle East Studies Librarian, The Ohio State University, USA
- **Huw Jones**, Head of Digital Library, Cambridge University Library, UK

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12:45 - 14:00 Lunch Break

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## Day 3 - Afternoon

Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May - Atrium Conference Room, Aga Khan Centre

### Sponsor Presentation 7

14:00 - 14:30

*Leila Books: Publishing in the Arab World*

**George Fawzi**, President and managing Director, Leila Books

### Session 7: Digital projects (20-minute papers + Q&A)

Moderator: **Susanne Saker**

14:30 - 15:30

1. *Text Reuse and the Library Catalogue*

**Peter Verkinderen**, Assistant Professor, Centre for Digital Humanities, AKU-ISMC, UK

2. *Persian and Arabic Optical Character Recognition for Open Source: Experiences of the FID Nahost, Halle (Saale)*

**Maida Farooq Buttar**, Employee of FID Nahost, The University and State Library of Saxony-Anhalt, Germany

15:30 - 15:45 Refreshments

15:45 - 16:45

1. *Project of the electronic publication of the al-Tantawi collection at SPbU: experience, results, and perspectives*

**Online**

**Olga Yastrebova** and team, Senior Researcher, National Library of Russia

2. *Arabic Manuscripts Digital Access Project of Istanbul Üniversitesi Rare Works Library*

**Cihan Kalın**, E-Resource Librarian, Istanbul University Central Library, Türkiye

16:45 - 17:00 Refreshments

### MELCom Business Meeting

Andreas Drechsler

17:00 - 18:00

- Concluding remarks and Board's reports
- MI Conference 2025
- Election: Treasurer

## **45<sup>th</sup> MELCom Conference Activities**

Please remember that all these activities are prebooked and must have been paid separately from the MELCom Conference attendance fees.

### **Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> May – MELCom dinner**

We will be enjoying an exciting array of Yemeni delicacies in this excellent restaurant: **Queen of Sheba\***, 3-4 Bouverie PI, W2 1RE

18:45 Meeting at Queen of Sheba

19:00 Dinner

\*Please be aware that there are other restaurants with similar names in London.

### **Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May – Excursion**

#### **Kew Gardens and Thames River cruise**

08:30 Meeting outside the Aga Khan Centre

09:00 Coach departure

10:00 Arrival at Kew Gardens

10:45 Tour of Kew Gardens (60 minutes)

16:00 Meeting at the Kew Gardens Pier

16:30 Boat departure

18:00 Arrival at Westminster Pier

## Abstracts

Organised alphabetically according to the last name of the presenter.

### ANI AVETISYAN ONLINE

RESEARCHER, MATENADARAN-RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF ANCIENT MANUSCRIPTS, ARMENIA

#### ***Newly Discovered Ottoman Turkish Manuscripts Authored by Famous Ottoman Physicians***

This paper focuses on the medical works discovered in the Ottoman Turkish manuscripts of Matenadaran. Out of the 400 Ottoman Turkish manuscripts, only 15 are copies of medical works, dating from the 17th-19th centuries. The majority of these manuscripts are copies of works authored by renowned Ottoman physicians, medical scholars, and medical chiefs from the 15th-18th centuries, such as Jerrah Ibrahim ibn Abdullah, Hekim Nidai Chelebi, Shirvanli Shemseddin-i Itaki, Derviş Omer Efendi al-Brusevi (known as Omer Şifai), and others. These works concentrate on either general medicine or some branches of medicine (pharmacology, anatomy, surgery, etc.). Moreover, some of them stand out as professional compilations of different medical works (known as Tıp Mecmuaları). During our presentation, we will focus on the following points. First, we will talk about the reasons why medical works became a source of interest to us, how they found their own place in our collection, who were the patrons or donors of the manuscripts, and so on. Afterwards, we will present these manuscripts in detail, showing their important role in medieval Islamic medicine, especially in the formation and development of the Ottoman medicine. Among them are such medical works as "Risale-i Manzum" ("Dürr-i Manzum", in verse) of the famous physician Hekim Nidai Chelebi, Dervish Omer Efendi al-Brusevi's "el-Cevher ül-Ferid fi Tıbb il-Cedîd" ("Tıbb-i Cedîd-i Kimya"), Shirvanlı Shemseddin-i İtaki's "Risale al-Teşrihiye al-İtaki", Jerrah Ibrahim ibn Abdullah's "Alâ'im-i Cerrâhîn," etc. At the end of our report, we will indicate the value of the mentioned manuscripts, as well as their role among other similar works, etc.

### MAIDA FAROOQ BUTTAR

EMPLOYEE OF FID NAHOST, THE UNIVERSITY AND STATE LIBRARY OF SAXONY-ANHALT, GERMANY

#### ***Persian and Arabic Optical Character Recognition for Open Source: Experiences of the FID Nahost, Halle (Saale)***

The FID is working on the digitisation of Persian and Arabic text production with OCR (Optical Character Recognition) training. This is a technology for recognizing text in images of scanned documents and photos, which is used for digitally advanced search and analysis methods. The goal of the FID is to improve the data models for non-Latin languages, in our case Arabic and Persian, and to make them available as open source in our repository. Since some criteria, such as open source, suitability for RTL languages, an adaptation of the training, have to be met, not too many tools come into consideration. So far, only Transkribus/Tesseract has been used for the open-source OCR for Arabic and Persian, more OCR engines such as Kraken for Escriptorium are planned. In order to be able to compare both tools in terms of recognition rate, both should be trained with samples from our material and receive basic training. The ground truth data is then used for this purpose. The FID also relies on the support of the community and networking and regularly publishes on github to share experiences.

### ABIR CHORFA

PROGRAM DIRECTOR, ANTIQUITIES COALITION'S PROJECTS IN ALGERIA

#### ***Intersection of Digital Technology and Cultural Heritage Preservation in Algeria***

This conference will address the importance of digitization in protecting cultural property and facing the illicit trafficking, and the common challenges faced in implementing digitization for cultural heritage, and highlight the (Turathi project) as a case study from Algeria.

Turathi: is a web-based tool developed for use by law enforcement and customs officers, as well as international partners, in identifying vulnerable cultural goods at high risk for looting and trafficking. The general public can also access the database to learn more about heritage

materials originating in Algeria and the importance of protecting heritage for future generations.

#### **U. DUYGU AYSAL CIN ONLINE**

LECTURER AT ISTANBUL TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY, TÜRKİYE

#### ***The Library of Higher School of Engineering (Mühendis Mekteb-i Âlîsi) in the Late Ottoman Empire and Early Turkish Republic (1909-1944)***

This paper deals with the library of the School of Engineering (Mühendis Mekteb-i Âlîsi) in the early 20th century with a special focus on the various aspects of library practices ranging from the daily activities of borrowing and returning books to the policies employed for the acquisition of library materials. While dealing with the library practices, the paper will also cover the development of the librarianship as a profession and hiring policies of the librarians. The School of Engineering took its roots from the Imperial School of Military Engineering (Mühendishâne-i Hümâyûn); the first school of engineering, which was established in the late 18th century and focused on the development of military technology. In time, Hendese-i Mülkiye (Civil School of Engineering) and then the Higher School of Engineering (which was established in 1909) evolved from Mühendishâne. Within this long time span, the library and the librarian undertook different roles to support engineering education. While the library became the main institution to provide all kind of engineering publications to the whole country, the librarians acquired more specialized tasks. This paper will deal with this changing mission of the library and the librarian from Mühendishâne to Mühendis Mekteb-i Âlîsi while paying attention on the various tasks undertaken by the library such as providing course materials to the students, rules and regulations concerning borrowing books, fines and penalties for late returns, management of the printing press of Mühendis Mekteb-i Âlîsi, providing books to the individuals and other libraries in the country and policies on collection development. The research for this study is based on the archival research held at the Prime Ministry Ottoman Archives in Istanbul, Prime Ministry Republican Archives in Ankara, ITU Archives, SALT Research Centre in Istanbul and collection of rare books of ITU.

#### **DEBBIE COX**

LEAD CURATOR, CONTEMPORARY BRITISH & IRISH PUBLICATIONS, BRITISH LIBRARY, UK

#### ***Arabic collections in the British Library at 50: reviewing change and looking to the future.***

In 2023, the British Library celebrated its first 50 years. This paper reviews the changing approach to Arabic language collections over those 50 years. I participated in that journey for the last 25 years, a period stretching from supplier records and early digitisation to non-print legal deposit and web archiving. Changes in the role and use of library collections driven by the internet have impacted on librarianship. So too has the demand for wider access to collection materials through digitisation. The concept of a national library and who it is for has also evolved. Public programmes, exhibitions and events, have expanded and there is greater involvement in collaborative research. As both Middle East studies and diaspora communities have changed, so too has the relationship with users and creators. Whilst digitisation of original collections continues alongside traditional collection building, web archiving is but one means for the Library to ensure that the experience and expression of Arab communities in the UK are represented within its collections and work. Libraries have been called to account for the past, and there is growing recognition of the need to re-examine both the provenance and description of collections. This paper will look back, picking out key milestones, and look forward, highlighting key concerns and issues facing curatorship now.



### **DALE CORREA**

MIDDLE EASTERN STUDIES LIBRARIAN & HISTORY COORDINATOR, UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN, USA

#### ***Towards Reparative Collecting & Digitization: A Community Symposium and Training Program***

As Middle Eastern Studies Librarian and Rare Book School-Mellon Foundation Fellow for Diversity in Cultural Heritage, I developed the "Towards Reparative Collecting & Digitization" Community Symposium Program at the UT Libraries in order to advance the understanding of cultural heritage, archives, and special collections and to promote our collections to broader publics and communities. With the development of the new Scholars Lab (a digital scholarship space) at the Perry-Castañeda Library, and considering my own interests in reparative and restorative practices in librarianship and scholarship, I wanted to create an opportunity for graduate students to expand their researcher skill-sets and build reflective approaches to their future professions. We are incredibly fortunate to have a wide range and depth of expertise at the UT Libraries, and it is from this well of experience and insight that this program draws. Cohort participants were encouraged to engage with existing writing (scholarly and popular) on reparative librarianship and digitization in thoughtful and critical ways, with the end goal being to create a sense of belonging to the conversation. What gets digitized and how it gets digitized are decisions that affect everyone, but most of all, marginalized communities that have been historically disadvantaged from participation in scholarship and the building of library collections (even, and especially, collections for which they are the subject). As part of this program, cohort participants were trained in the basics of scanning, OCR, and outputs/applications with a material selection of their choice, so that they have insight into the hands-on processes of digitization and how to use this technology for their goals. The program's culminating public symposium put the cohort's theoretical and practical experiences in conversation with a digital cultural heritage scholar and engagement with the audience in order to realize new approaches to digitized resources.

### **SEVGI ATILA CÜNÜŞ ONLINE**

RARE BOOKS AND HISTORICAL ARCHIVES LIBRARIAN, BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY, TÜRKİYE

#### ***Boğaziçi University Library Rare Books Collection From Past to Present***

In this presentation, the story of Boğaziçi University Rare Books Collection from Robert College to the present will be mentioned. As it is known, Robert College is a foreign American school established in the Ottoman capital. Thanks to this, books from both Western and Ottoman geography are collected together in its library. It was originally a missionary school, but it had a different structure from other missionary schools. Its founder, Cyrus Hamlin, had a religious background as well as experience in other humanities subjects such as engineering, history. He reflected these experiences on the College that he founded and therefore on the library collection. First of all, we will touch upon the history of Robert College and its changes over time and a brief library history will be presented within the scope of the rare books collection. Some examples of the collection will be shown and the multicultural structure of the rare books collection highlighted.

### **MOHAMED ELZALABANY, CATALOGUING LIBRARIAN ONLINE**

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, CAIRO OVERSEAS OFFICE, EGYPT

#### ***The Significance of Transliteration in Enhancing Accessibility and Exchange of Arabic Research Data***

The tactics for making Arabic research data more accessible are explored in this conference talk, which focuses on metadata management and transliteration issues within the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) framework.

Significant obstacles arise from the complexity of transliterating Arabic, which are influenced by script peculiarities and discipline-specific requirements. In order to guarantee proper representation and universal accessibility of Arabic content, we investigate the implementation of multilingual metadata standards such as Dublin Core and Unicode encoding (UTF-8).

Arabic and other common languages bilingual metadata descriptions improve data discoverability and promote cross-cultural cooperation.

Furthermore, the user experience and accessibility of data are improved by the use of transliteration services, localized date formats, and right-to-left (RTL) support. Effective data management is facilitated by the maintenance of data completeness and consistency, which is made possible by metadata quality assurance procedures.

Language barriers can be overcome and the global impact of Arabic research data can be increased by stakeholders by maximizing the utility of metadata through training programs, user-friendly interfaces, and adherence to interoperability standards. These tactics encourage cooperation, sharing of knowledge, and creativity among various linguistic communities.

#### **MICHAEL ERDMAN**

HEAD, MIDDLE EAST AND CENTRAL ASIA DEPARTMENT, BRITISH LIBRARY, UK

#### ***Archiving the Archive: Integrating the Der-Khachadourian Library into the British Library***

Over 20 years ago, the British Library acquired materials from the library of Dr. Ardashes Der-Khachadourian, one of Lebanon's most prolific Armenologists. The collection included some 250 books and pamphlets in Armenian and Armeno-Turkish, as well as hundreds of newspapers and magazines in Armenian from around the world. They languished in the Library's basements for nearly two decades but are now being catalogued, conserved and added to the collection. The periodicals present a particular challenge, as they reflect an archive of primary sources for Der-Khachadourian's seminal bibliography of the Armenian periodical press, rather than consolidated holdings of the individual titles. This presentation will explore how such materials are being incorporated into the Library's holdings and the new directions in which they take Armenian librarianship at the British Library. In particular, it will ask whether metadata might be a stronger justification for custodianship than items themselves.

#### **IOANA FEODOROV**

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR, ERC TYPARABIC PROJECT, INSTITUTE FOR SOUTH-EAST EUROPEAN STUDIES, ROMANIAN ACADEMY, ROMANIA

#### ***Arabic Books Printed in the 18th Century in Moldavia, Wallachia, and Greater Syria. New Research Outcomes***

The TYPARABIC project team has received from the ERC an Advanced Grant for 2021-2026 to survey the Arabic books printed in the 18th century beyond the frontiers of Western Europe, in Wallachia, Moldavia, and the Ottoman provinces of Syria and Lebanon. The story starts with Antim the Iberian, the most skilled printer of Wallachia, and the Syrian metropolitan Athanasios Dabbas, in between two terms as patriarch of Antioch. They printed in Arabic and Greek a Book of the Divine Liturgies at Snagov in 1701 and a Book of the Hours at Bucharest in 1702. Dabbas was presented with the Arabic printing implements and established a press at Aleppo, where he printed in 1706-1711 eleven books. Besides Antim, he was supported in his efforts by the prince of Wallachia Constantin Brâncoveanu and, in 1708, by the Cossack hetmans Ivan Mazepa and Daniel Apostol. After Dabbas's press closed, his disciple Abdallah Zakher opened a press for the Greek Catholics in Khenchara (Mount Lebanon), for translations of Catholic books. After the 1724 split in the Church of Antioch (which will be commemorated by both Churches in 2024), the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch was helped again with printing Arabic liturgical and polemical books in the Romanian Principalities, while in 1750 the Patriarch Sylvester of Antioch opened an Orthodox press in Beirut with assistance from Wallachia. The TYPARABIC project team is preparing the first comprehensive catalogue of the books printed in all these presses, which amount to 47 titles (known at present). In this paper, the team leader will present for the first time this catalogue and its benefits for the scholarly community working on Middle Eastern printed books. Among them, the first state-of-the-art description of each book, the Arabic-script, transcription, and English translation of the titles, incipit and colophon, the persons involved in printing, the place, content, etc. The author

will also speak of the first catalogue of Müteferrika's Turkish press in Istanbul, another task of the TYPARABIC team.

#### **TAN HUISM,**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, QATAR NATIONAL LIBRARY, QATAR

#### ***Himaya: Qatar National Library's programme to combat trafficking of documentary heritage in the MENA region***

The issue of looting and trafficking of cultural heritage in the Middle East is a complex and deeply troubling phenomenon. As the cradle of civilization and the home of numerous historical empires, kingdoms and diverse cultures, the region boasts an extensive array of archaeological sites and cultural treasures. However, the region is also one where there has been political instability, armed conflicts, and social-economic challenges, creating an environment ripe for unscrupulous individuals and criminal organizations to exploit. The efforts of many enforcement organisations have been predominately focused on artifacts such as sculptures, ceramics, metalwork and the likes. There has been a notable oversight regarding documentary heritage such as manuscripts and archives, which are equally, if not more, vulnerable due to their portability and inconspicuous nature.

In response to this pressing threat, Qatar National Library launched the Himaya programme in 2020. Recognising that the loss of such heritage deprives communities of their tangible cultural identity, Himaya is also aligned with QNL's role as IFLA's Preservation and Conservation Center for Arab countries. This presentation aims to provide an overview of the Himaya programme, showcasing the initiatives to support this fight against the illegal trafficking of documentary heritage so that the region's cultural legacy can be safeguarded for the present and the future generations.

#### **FATIMA KADIC**

HEAD LIBRARIAN, FACULTY OF ISLAMIC STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF SARAJEVO, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

#### ***The Turkish and Bosnian Mevlid Manuscripts and Printed Copies in Arabic, Latin and Cyrillic Scripts and Their Recitations in Bosnian Mevlid Celebrations***

The first mention of the practice of reciting mevlid in Bosnia is found in the Gazi Husrev Beg's (d. 1541) deed of endowment from 1531 in which he bequeathed mevlid celebrations to be performed in his mosque every year in the month of the Prophet's birth, Rabi' al-Awwal. In Ottoman Bosnia (1463-1878) the famous Ottoman mevlid of Süleyman Çelebi (d. 1422), Vesilet-ü Necat, was recited. There are a great number of manuscripts of the Çelebi's mevlid in Bosnian public and private collections, the oldest being kept in the Library of Gazi Husrev Beg copied by Hüseyin İbn Bali in 1613. The first, and the most famous mevlid in Bosnian language was written by Hafiz Salih Gašović in 1878. He was asked by the Kolašin (the Montenegrin city in which he served as kaymakam) dignitaries to write mevlid in Bosnian language in order to be able to understand its text. That was, actually the adapted translation of the Çelebi's mevlid. It was published in ten editions in Arebica (Bosnian language and Arabic script) in nearly 35.000 copies, and at the same time it was still transcribed by hand. Three more Bosnian adaptations of Çelebi's mevlid were printed in Arebica, but they never reached the Gašović's mevlid's popularity which is still recited today. The first original Bosnian mevlid was written by the famous Bosnian scholar Dr. Safvet Beg Bašagić in 1924. His hymn "Welcome to you the most beloved son of the Arabic race and homeland..." is still an obligatory part of every mevlid celebration in Bosnia. In 1963 the mevlid of Rešad Kadić won the best mevlid competition announced by the Supreme Islamic Council of Yugoslavia and his subtle and refined poem saw four editions in eight years and was printed in 97.000 copies in total. The mevlid celebration in Bosnia still holds its significance not just in mosques as a celebration of the Prophet's birthday, but as the open public summer celebration as well as the private celebration of different joyful events such as moving to a new house or child birth.

### **CIHAN KALIN, SONAY TAHMAZ KALECI, SELCUK AYDIN**

E-RESOURCE LIBRARIAN; HEAD OF LIBRARY; HEAD OF LIBRARY DIPLOMACY AND PROJECT UNIT, ISTANBUL UNIVERSITY CENTRAL LIBRARY, TÜRKIYE

#### ***Arabic Manuscripts Digital Access Project of Istanbul Üniversitesi Rare Works Library***

The re-cataloguing project of the Arabic manuscripts in the Istanbul University (IU) Rare Works Library, which started in 2021, was completed and 14,172 works were made available to researchers within the scope of the project. With the studies carried out, material numbering errors were corrected, incorrect tags were corrected, and the catalogue was expanded by identifying the *risalas* in journal-type works one by one. The project was carried out in collaboration with IU Library staff and academics from the Faculty of Theology. IU Rare Works Library Arabic Manuscripts Catalogue was opened to reader service, with the completion of the link matching works required to access the digital copies of the works and the work imprint information on the catalogue browsing web page of the IU Library and Documentation Department. While cataloguing the works in the digital system, the names of the works, additional titles, authors, reproducers, commentators, subject headings regarding the content of the works, the language of the work and other colophon information were entered into the system. In this way, it is aimed to make it easier for researchers to access information about the works related to their research topics on the IU catalogue web page.

### **MARIJANA KAVČIĆ**

SENIOR LIBRARIAN IN ORIENTAL COLLECTIONS, NATIONAL AND UNIVERSITY LIBRARY "ST. CLEMENT OF OHRID" – SKOPJE, NORTH MACEDONIA

#### ***History of the Manastir kütüphanesi (Library of Bitola) in light of stamps and records found in the Oriental manuscripts of the NUL "St. Clement of Ohrid" in Skopje***

The National and University Library "St. Clement of Ohrid" in Skopje hosts the largest collection of the Oriental manuscripts and rare books in North Macedonia. Collected during the late forties, fifties, sixties and seventies of the last century, first by the Institute of the National History, later by the State Archives and finally by the Library itself, those materials often represent the only remnants of the numerous Islamic libraries which existed on the territory of North Macedonia during the Ottoman reign. As the inventory books for the largest part of the collection's holdings - acquired from the State Archives in 1969 - were lost or destroyed in the 1963 earthquake, the stamps and records found in the manuscripts and printed books often are the only evidence of their provenance. Numerous Oriental manuscripts and printed books held by the National and University Library in Skopje have a stamp of Manastir kütüphanesi (Library of Bitola) thus bearing witness to its once rich holdings. By inspecting the historical sources, limited mostly to the acts of endowments and the accounts of eyewitnesses written down in form of travelogues or general histories, and by analyzing the relevant stamps and the accompanying inscriptions, the paper explores the history of the Manastir kütüphanesi and its connection to the one of the first libraries in Bitola, founded in 1506 as a part of endowment of Ishak Çelebi.

### **ANITA KEIZERS AND MARIËTTE KEUKEN**

SUBJECT LIBRARIANS, LEIDEN UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES, THE NETHERLANDS

#### ***Middle Eastern Library in Leiden***

In September 2024 the Middle Eastern Library will be opened in the new branch of the Leiden University Libraries. This new department will contain the specialized collections of the Netherlands Institute for the Near East (NINO) and the African Studies Centre (ASC) beside the modern Middle East collection of the Leiden University Libraries. The realization of this unique interdisciplinary library on the ancient and modern Middle East and Africa will be an asset for the international academic society. Preparations for the move have been going on since 2018 when the NINO library became officially part of the Leiden University Libraries, we will enlighten you on some of the challenges we faced during this process.

## JOËL LASZLO

LIAISON LIBRARIAN, UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, UNIVERSITY BASEL

### ***Presentation of the Bibliotheca Afghanica Collection at the Basel University Library***

The Bibliotheca Afghanica was founded in 1974 on the initiative of the Swiss couple Paul and Veronika Bucherer. Thanks to a broad network of researchers, the collection has grown over the decades and today represents one of the largest European collections of written and visual sources on the history, culture, flora and fauna of Afghanistan. The Bibliotheca Afghanica was bequeathed to Basel University Library in 2023 as part of a ceremonial act of donation. Since then, the University Library Basel has endeavoured to gradually catalogue the holdings and make them available to researchers and the general public. By focusing on a few key areas of the collection, I would like to present the entire collection of the Basel University Library.

## TINE LAVENT

HEAD LIBRARIAN, NETHERLANDS-FLEMISH INSTITUTE IN CAIRO

### ***So You Want To Be a Librarian? On Slaying Ghouls and Beating the Odds***

Truth be told—within popular imagery, the librarian is generally not depicted as an exemplar of admirable bravery. They take on the role of the dust-covered antihero at best. Contemporary history has brought, however, numerous examples of fearless librarians to the front. With this talk, I intend to open the question of where our social responsibilities as (academic) librarians lie. I will do so from my own context by introducing the NVIC library within the broader landscape of knowledge exchange and conservation in Cairo today, sketching an imaginary map of libraries and archives, both governmental and others, in the Egyptian capital. Drawing on various forms of international social engagement on a library and archive level, I will look at what can be done when access to knowledge is under direct or indirect threat. Indeed, ghouls come in many shapes and forms. Who's to say a librarian cannot be a knight in shining armour?

## ANTONELLA MURATGIA AND FRANCESCA BELLINO

HEAD LIBRARIAN AND PROFESSOR FOR ARABIC LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE, UNIVERSITY OF NAPLES L'ORIENTALE, ITALY

### ***The Collection of Oriental manuscripts of the University of Naples L'Orientale: state of the art and current projects***

The paper aims to present the collection of Oriental manuscripts held at the University of Naples L'Orientale. This collection consists of approximately 400 manuscripts written in various languages (Arabic, Persian, Turkish-Ottoman, Thai, Chinese) that have different origins, dates, and subject matter. After an initial major work of preservation, restoration, and partial digitisation carried out by the library, over a year ago we started a special university project involving the identification of all the works these manuscripts contain, their cataloguing, content description and codicological description. The project also includes the digitisation of all the items in the collection as well as the restoration of those that are still damaged. We are talking about a valuable patrimony unknown to many scholars and colleagues, which, after decades of oblivion, now resulted in a series of research projects and, hopefully, will become part of the Digital Library of the Orientale. Most of the manuscripts are written in Arabic and are of Egyptian and Yemeni provenance. The remaining portion includes Persian (around 40 items), Ottoman Turkish, Thai (50 items), Chinese manuscripts. The great interest of the collection lies in the variety of topics it covers including religious sciences, medicine, pharmacology, astronomy, adab and literature. From a codicological point of view, almost all the Islamic bindings are preserved, and the main calligraphic styles are represented. Thanks to the work done in the last years, carried out by a few people in the library and with many difficulties, the visibility of this collection has increased. A project involving both librarians from the rare books and manuscripts section and scholars with expertise in various languages and disciplines has been launched with the aim of compiling a catalogue to be published by Brill. An exhibition is also planned to make this heritage known outside the university. It is a beautiful story, which rewards the work of the librarians.

## HANS-PETER PÖKEL

HEAD LIBRARIAN, GERMAN ORIENT INSTITUTE BEIRUT, LEBANON

### ***The National Library of Baghdad – a Symbol of National and Cultural Identity: An Outsider Perspective***

National libraries are rather considered as guardians of the history of a nation and preserve the memory of its cultural heritage that is part of a nation's history and identity. National libraries have the claim to provide all available information about the history, memory and intellectual achievements of a nation to the public. Although the idea of a nation and its identity forming factors like history, tradition, language and religion was formed in nineteenth century Europe it became a role model for many colonized areas. The National library of Baghdad was founded by Muriel Jesse Forbes (1884-1969) and Gertrude Bell (1869-1926) firstly as a private library in 1920 as the Peace Library (Maktabat al-Salām). It is one of the oldest national libraries in the Arab world – following the Dār al-Kutub in Cairo that was the first National library in the Arab world. It took until the 1960s that the Peace Library became a public library and finally turned into a national library in the late 1980s. It was in the following decades until the very present exposed to numerous dangers and challenges. In my presentation I will first introduce from an outside perspective into the history of the National Library of Baghdad. A particular part will be the devastating period after 2003 and the destruction of cultural heritage during the US invasion that was deeply reflected in a diary by the director of the National Library of Baghdad, Saad Eskander, who highly supported the mission of spreading humanistic and tolerant cultural values and its impact to an emerging democracy by education, reflecting and understanding as the leading mission of state institutions and particularly of the National Library of Baghdad as a guardian of history and culture. In this understanding a library and particularly a national library becomes an integral part of the modern cultural and national identity that is shaped by a remembered past that is kept vital by memory.

## CHRISTOPH RAUCH

HEAD OF ORIENTAL DEPARTMENT, STAATSBIBLIOTHEK ZU BERLIN, GERMANY

### ***On the Last Train to Istanbul: the Fate of Jewish Librarians at the Berlin State Library during the Nazi era***

Several German academic librarians of Jewish descent had worked in the Oriental Department of the Berlin State Library since its foundation in 1919. Their lives took a dramatic turn when the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933. The former department director Gotthold Weil (1882–1960) became director of the Hebrew National Library in Jerusalem in 1934. The Hebraist Arthur Spanier (1889–1944) was murdered in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp after a planned emigration to America failed. This lecture deals in particular with the Arabist Walter Gottschalk (1891-1974). He initially went into exile in Belgium after his dismissal from the library before he and his wife managed to emigrate to Istanbul at the last minute in 1941. He set up an institute for library science at Istanbul University. Gottschalk's personnel file at the State Library and numerous other original sources impressively document the rigor of Prussian administrative practice during the Nazi era. However, the sources also reveal the multi-layered levels of actors in the supporting network around Gottschalk.

## WASSILENA SEKULOVA

LIBRARIAN, OXFORD CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES, OXFORD, UK

### ***The Collection of Kuwait Library at Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies***

Established in 1985, the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies (OCIS) serves as an independent institution dedicated to the advanced study of Islam and the Muslim world. The former Prince of Wales became its Patron in 1993, and in 2012, HM Queen Elizabeth II granted the Centre a Royal Charter. Governed by a Board of Trustees comprising scholars and statesmen from across the globe, OCIS is committed to a multi-disciplinary study of all facets of Islamic culture, civilization, and contemporary Muslim societies.

In addition to hosting various academic events and programmes, OCIS is home to the Kuwait Library. Holding a modern collection of more than 50,000 volumes, the Library aligns with the Centre's academic pursuits, focusing on classical Islamic studies and disciplines. It also

encompasses specialised subjects such as Islamic Law and Finance, Sociology of Muslim Societies globally, and Environment and Sustainability in the Muslim world. Currently, the Library is expanding its holdings in the fields of Islam in Central Asia and Islam in Africa, inspired by recent collaborations of the Centre. Moreover, the Kuwait Library houses Special Collections, including private libraries and archives of distinguished academics. It also features numismatic and manuscript collections with a specific emphasis on Islam in South Asia, particularly India.

The intent of the proposed paper is to present the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies and its activities, introducing the lesser-known collections of the Kuwait Library to the broader, specialised audience.

#### **PETER VERKINDEREN**

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, CENTRE FOR DIGITAL HUMANITIES, AKU-ISMC, UK

##### ***Text reuse and the library catalogue***

The KITAB project has worked the last five years on analysing text reuse in the Arabic written tradition over a period spanning the first millennium of Islam. We will present some results of this research project. In addition, we would like to present to the MELCOM community our plans for the future, since they are closely related to libraries. On the one hand, we would like to make text reuse data available to readers through library catalogues. This opens up the possibility for readers who are interested in a particular Arabic, Persian or Urdu text to see how this text was embedded in the wider written tradition, and which other texts are most closely related. We will present what this could look like. Additionally, we are working on a project that will make it possible to mass transcribe entire library collections of digitized Arabic-script manuscripts.

#### **MUHAMMAD ISA WALEY ONLINE**

RETIRED CURATOR FOR PERSIAN AND TURKISH, BRITISH LIBRARY, UK

##### ***Masterpieces of Persian Calligraphy in British Library Manuscripts***

This illustrated talk will feature a selection of Persian manuscripts of high calligraphic quality. Dating from between the 7th/13th and 13th/19th centuries, most are the work of famous penmen. In addition to characteristics of handwriting, such features as page layout and ornamentation will also be considered, as well as the manuscripts' textual content.

#### **IMAN WEHEBA**

SENIOR CATALOGUING LIBRARIAN, QATAR NATIONAL LIBRARY

##### ***Developing Qatar National Library Subject Headings (QNLISH): Mechanisms and Challenges***

Arabic materials cataloguers who assign Arabic subject headings to their collections usually face a common challenge in subject cataloguing. This challenge is the limited level of specificity in all areas of knowledge in the available lists of Arabic subject headings especially when compared to comprehensive international lists of subject headings such as the English Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and the French List of Subject Headings (Rameau). This necessitated the need to translate and adapt new Arabic subject headings from the English (LCSH) by cataloguers in many Arab countries or from the French (Rameau) by cataloguers in the North African countries. This presentation is aiming to illustrate the techniques and workflows adopted to develop the QNLISH and the mechanisms used to overcome some challenges and technical issues. Much focus will be given to the QNL Identities and Vocabularies Solution (IVS) aiming to fill the gap of the outdated and limited controlled vocabulary tools in Arabic language. This solution is mainly aimed at speeding up and streamlining the Arabic cataloguing process within QNL. This is because QNL cataloguers spend a significant amount of time translating and adapting new Arabic subject headings from LCSH. The IVS will include both QNLISH and QNL National Authority File (QNL-NAF) with cross-lingual mapping to equivalent English names and subject headings from LCSH. The IVS also serves as a valuable linked open data tool that can be integrated as a source of Arabic

controlled vocabularies. Hence, contributing to more standardized Arabic subject terminology and improved name headings consistency across various QNL systems and platforms.

#### **MIRJA WEINMANN**

LIBRARIAN FOR TURKIC LANGUAGES AND PERSIAN, BAVARIAN STATE LIBRARY, GERMANY

##### ***Illustrated Persian lithographs – managing a researcher’s legacy***

While lithographic printing was used in most countries of the Middle East, its popularity peaked in 19th century Qajar Persia. Introduced in the 1830s, printing with limestone quickly became the favorite printing technique and covered all genres: we find religious works, Persian classics and popular works, military exercise manuals and scientific works. After an initial period where printers left blank spaces for illustrations, printed illustrated books became a regular and popular phenomenon since the mid-19th century and for several years, books of all genres and sizes were adorned by illustrations. Today these illustrated items can rarely be found at book dealers or auctions. A favorable opportunity arose when the Bavarian State Library was able to acquire a collection of over 160 illustrated Persian, predominantly lithographed prints from private ownership. Current research estimates a total of about 350 editions of illustrated lithographs, thus this acquisition accounts for almost half of all known editions. They broadly represent the development and range of lithographic printing and its pictorial design in the second half of the 19th century. However, the acquired collection not only comprises printed books but also the previous owner’s research materials, consisting of various paper copies and microfilms of illustrated lithographs. Apart from a quick overview on Persian printing history, specifically for illustrated books, this talk aims to present this valuable collection while also discussing the process of making these diverse items accessible for users.

#### **OLGA YASTREBOVA, ALEXANDER MATVEEV, TIMUR SLESAREV, ANNA MOISEEVA, YULIYA KLUSOVA**

SENIOR RESEARCHERS, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF RUSSIA

##### ***Project of the electronic publication of the al-Tantawi collection at SPbU: experience, results and perspectives***

Muhammad Ayyad al-Tantawi (1810–1861) – professor at St Petersburg University, a major expert in Arabic literature and language, who made an important contribution to the development of Oriental Studies in Russia. In 1839, he was invited to Russia and brought with him from Egypt a collection of manuscripts numbering 156 items, which the St Petersburg University acquired after the death of the owner. This collection has become the focus of a project supported by the Russian Science Foundation (RSF), its main objective being an electronic publication of the collection. An on-line database for the publication of manuscripts in digital form has been developed, which comprises a standard description set (‘library card’) with detailed bibliographical and codicological information. The paper that the working group is going to present, will describe the structure of the database, principles of its work, options for search and sorting of the data it contains. We shall also discuss further plans of applying the developed on-line database for cataloguing the entire collection of Islamic manuscripts at St Petersburg University. The next step will be linking the database with other cataloguing systems, such as “Depositarius” developed at the National Library of Russia, and other online catalogues of Islamic Mss being developed in Russia. We believe that discussing principles of online publication of Mss collections applied in our project, as well as in other project in the West and in the Middle East would be of interest for the participants of MELCOM forum.

#### **RUSTIN ZARKAR**

FIELD DIRECTOR, LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, CAIRO OVERSEAS OFFICE

##### ***The Library of Congress Cairo Overseas Office: Opportunities and Challenges in Cooperative Acquisitions***

In this paper, I will highlight the history of the Library of Congress Cairo Overseas Office from its foundation in 1963 to the present day. As one of six overseas offices operated by the Library of Congress, the Cairo Office is responsible for acquiring, cataloguing, and processing Arabic,



Armenian, Kurdish, and Turkish language library materials in a number of different formats from 22 countries in the Middle East and North Africa. In addition to acquiring materials for the Library of Congress's main location in Washington, D.C., the Cairo Overseas Office manages the Middle East Cooperative Acquisitions Program, which collects and distributes library materials on behalf of libraries and other research institutions. Throughout the presentation, I will highlight the opportunities and challenges in cooperative acquisitions between institutions, as well as major trends in the publishing and distribution in the MENA region. These trends include economic conditions, the transition to electronic formats, and the increase in the acquisition of ethnic and religious minority publications in recent years.

***Panel discussion: AI in Libraries and Librarians in Digital Humanities***

**MAGDA EL-SHERBINI, YASMIN FAGHIHI, HUW JONES**

PROFESSOR AND MIDDLE EAST STUDIES, LIBRARIAN, THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY, USA; HEAD OF NEAR AND MIDDLE EASTERN, DEPARTMENT, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, UK; HEAD OF DIGITAL LIBRARY, CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY, UK

This session is planned as a discussion around AI and DH in a library context. Magda al-Sherbini will introduce a potential application for the use of AI in Ohio States University library. This example will serve as an incentive to openly investigate what constitutes an AI application, with a particular focus on bibliographic and research data. We will facilitate a discussion on how such applications may impact our work as librarians in academic libraries. Moreover, we are planning to disambiguate some of the terminology used in Digital Humanities and take a discursive approach to a variety of methods, including TEI, Linked Open Data and IIIF.

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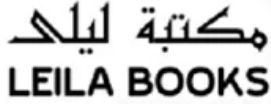


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