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Introduction

This is the first Newsletter of Melcom International, the European Association of Middle East Librarians. It is intended to publish it twice a year. It is circulated to all paying members and to interested institutions and individuals. Contributions to the Newsletter may be written in all European languages, but for the sake of convenience it is preferred that they be offered to the editors in English, French or German only.

Melcom International has till recently been the rather loosely-organized Association of Middle East Librarians in Europe. At the end of the seventies it was founded, or rather developed, under the presidency of Derek Hopwood, as an extension of the British-based Melcom UK. This international dimension of Melcom has proved such a success and has fulfilled a need that it was decided at the Melcom conference in Paris (1988) to officially establish a separate body which bears the name of Melcom International. The present board of Melcom International (identical with the editorial board of this Newsletter) was elected in July 1991 and confirmed in the opening session of the 14th conference in Rabat. Its mandate will last till July 1994.

Melcom International’s 14th conference in Rabat

The 13th conference of Melcom International would have been held in 1991 in Rabat at the invitation of Mme Latifa Benjelloun-Laraoui, who had already attended the conferences in Durham (1989) and Istanbul (1990). Due to force of circumstances the Rabat conference had to be cancelled almost at the last minute because some of the members were prevented by their governments from participating (due to the Gulf War and its aftermath). The Board decided then that the next, 14th, conference would, nevertheless, be held in Rabat.

The 14th conference of Rabat in 1992 was held in co-operation with the Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines of the Université Mohamed V in Rabat. Local coordinators were the professors Abdelmajid Kaddouri and Ahmed-Chouqui Binebine. Melcom International gratefully acknowledges the hospitality offered to the conference by the Rabat Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences and especially by its dean, Professor Abdelwahed Bendaud. In addition to this, excellent hospitality was offered to the participants by the manager of Hotel Balima in Rabat, Mrs. Suzanne Harroch, and her staff.

The meetings of the conference were held on 27-28 April 1992 in one of the Faculty rooms in the main building of the Faculty. The plenary opening session was held in the Al-Sharif Al-Idrisi Amphitheatre of the Faculty. On 29 April an excursion by train was made to the city of Fès. Apart from a considerable Moroccan presence of some twenty librarians, the conference was attended by nationals from Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Spain, and the U.S.A.

The programme of the 14th conference was as follows:
Sunday 26 April 1992: Informal meeting in Hotel Balima; first contacts with members and hosts.
Monday 27 April 1992: Opening session with speeches by Professor Abdelwahed Bendaoud, Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences of the Université Mohamed V and by Dr. Jan Just Witkam, president of Melcom International. These speeches were followed by practical information on the conference given by Françoise Barrès-Kotobi (secretary of Melcom International) and Jill Butterworth (treasurer of Melcom International).

Françoise Barrès-Kotobi read out the names of those who had sent regrets, conveyed information given by members absent from this conference, and, finally, informed those present of the results of the elections for Melcom’s Board that had been held by mail in July 1991. The results of the elections were confirmed by the participants at the conference, and thereby the present Board was officially installed. Everybody regretted that the former president of the Board, Dr. Derek Hopwood, had been unable to come to Rabat. Jill Butterworth gave her account of the finances of Melcom International for the year 1991 and announced an increase in the membership fee from 1992 onwards.

The opening session was followed by a reception offered by the Faculty in honour of the participants at the conference.

At the first session (chair: Professor Abdelmajid Kaddouri) the following papers were presented: Ahmed-Chouqui Binebine (Rabat University), L’histoire des bibliothèques au Maroc, with particular attention to the institution of the waqf. Abdelmajid Benyoussef (General Library, Rabat), La Bibliothèque Générale (archives et manuscrits). Kambiz Eslami (Princeton University Library), The Princeton University Library Near East Collection.

Mme Jeanne Mansouri (Rabat University), La bibliothèque de la Faculté des Sciences Economiques, Juridiques et Politiques.

The session was concluded by a discussion of all four papers.

After a lunch in town, at one of Rabat’s pavement restaurants, the conference resumed its work. In the second session (chair: Mrs. Marie-José Bianquis) the following papers were presented: Françoise Bogaert (La Source, Rabat), La bibliothèque de La Source comme exemple d’une institution étrangère au Maroc. Said Temsamani (American Legation, Tangiers), The Library of the American Legation in Tangiers.

M’Hamed Jadda (Rabat University), La bibliothèque de la Faculté des Lettres et des Sciences Humaines de Rabat.

Introduction to the Bibliothèque Générale by Abdelmajid Benyoussef and joint presentation by two of its librarians: Abdelkarim Hafidi (General Library, Rabat), Le fonds des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Générale, and by Mohamed Rachidi (General Library, Rabat), Le fonds des archives de la Bibliothèque Générale.

This joint presentation was followed by a visit to all three departments which had just been introduced. First, the participants visited the Faculty Library and saw its students’ reading room, the rare books and manuscripts department, and, finally, the impressive professors’ reading room, which is provided with a good collection of local and foreign reference works.

Then a visit was made to the Bibliothèque Générale, which is housed in the adjoining building. In the absence of its learned director, Professor Mohamed Benchérifa, Melcom International’s members were received by the deputy librarian, Dr. Abdelmajid Benyoussef, who is in charge of the Library’s daily affairs and who supervises the Moroccan National Bibliography. After an introduction to the main building, the general reading room and part of the stacks, the manuscript collection, which is housed in a small separate building, was visited. The staff of the manuscript department had laid out on the table a choice collection of the rarest and most impressive pieces of the Library’s manuscripts. These, and the more common library tools, such as the card catalogues, and the Library’s admission and research formalities aroused the collegial curiosity of the librarian visitors.

As Morocco has no officially designated National Library, by sheer virtue of its central position and its enormous holdings and resources, the Bibliothèque Générale is, in fact, charged with that responsibility. This unofficial position of the Library as Morocco’s National Library is even more underlined by the presence of its huge collection of manuscripts and archival materials. As so many other collections of manuscripts in the world, it is as yet only partly described in printed catalogues, and can only be fully researched with the help of the card catalogue which is available in the reading room. The competent staff, the pleasant surroundings, the studious atmosphere, and, above all, the richness of the collection make working there a rare treat which one is unlikely to forget.

The evening of Monday 27 April 1992 was free.
On Tuesday 28 April 1992 the conference continued. In the third session (chair: Dr. Geoffrey Roper) the following papers were presented:

Maria-Luisa Avila Navarro (Escuela de Estudios Arabes, Granada), *Archives digitalisées des documents arabes*.


Ubaidly Ubaidly (Nicosia), *The PC for producing multilingual indexes*.

After the coffee break the participants set out, in a caravan of private cars belonging to the Moroccan colleagues, to Salé, Rabat’s twin city on the other side of the river, Bou Regreg. There the conference visited the Sbihia Library, a privately owned and organized institution which belongs to the Sbih family. It is housed in a modern building, just outside the old wall of Salé. It is open every day, except on Mondays. Entrance is free, although the visitors have, of course, to comply with the rules of the house. Two large reading rooms cater for approximately two hundred students. These visitors appear to be mostly local students who have no place to study at home. They usually bring their book(s) and study notes with them and use the library as a quiet place to work. It was evident from this and previous visits to the Sbihia Library that it fulfills an important local function in this respect. For the advanced researcher, the Sbihia library has much to offer as well. It has a well-stocked reference library on the Islamic sciences. It has an important manuscript collection (part of which was recently described) and it has an ambitious publication programme, mostly of texts of local Salé importance.

Consulting the manuscripts of the Sbihia Library presents no difficulty whatsoever. The curator, Si Abdallah Sbih, graciously receives his scholarly guests in his small study and lets them share in his erudition in a most generous way. Local friends and foreign scholars alike partake of their sip of tea and taste of knowledge. The Sbihia establishment proved to be an altogether fortunate mixture of old and modern. After this excursion to Salé, the participants of the Melcom conference returned on foot to Rabat, crossing river Bou Regreg on board of one of the many hand-operated ferry boats.

In the fourth session (chair: Professor A.C. Binebine) the following papers were presented:

Geoffrey Roper (Cambridge University Library), *Islamic manuscript collections. A new survey and bibliography*.

Sara Descamps-Wassif (Institut du Monde Arabe), *Fichier d'autorités bio-bibliographiques à la bibliothèque de l'Institut du Monde Arabe*.

Marie-José Bianquis (IREMAM, Aix-en-Provence), *L'information sur les thèses françaises de Madrid au Maroc en passant par THESAM*.

Mohamed Sghir Janjar, *La bibliothèque de la Fondation du Roi Abdul Aziz à Aïn Diab*.

After the tea break a round-table discussion was open to all participants. First, Mrs. Meline Nielsen, Melcom International’s host in 1993, gave a survey of the library facilities at Selly Oak in Birmingham.

Then, all those who had not presented papers were given the opportunity to give a short description of their institution or the projects they were currently engaged in. It was stimulating to see how many Moroccan participants had come to this session in order to inform the participants about their libraries and activities. The Moroccan participants were given the assurance by Melcom International’s president that they would be kept informed about Melcom International’s further activities.

The president then expressed his wish that the coming of Melcom International to Rabat would somehow result in the foundation of a local Moroccan Melcom-like organization. He once more stressed what were, in his opinion, the ingredients of Melcom’s success: a loose-knit organization free from bureaucracy; informal contacts between all concerned regardless of their official affiliations; and personal enthusiasm of each and every participant for such an enterprise.

With this last part of the programme the 14th conference was officially over.

In the evening an opulent dinner was served on the roof of one of the wings of Hotel Balima, organized by Mme Harroch and her staff. It was an excellent opportunity for all participants to reaffirm their acquaintance with their Moroccan colleagues and look back on the intensive and gratifying experience that was the 14th conference of Melcom International in Rabat.

On Wednesday 29 April 1992 there was an early start for all who wished to participate in the excursion by train to Fes. In Fes, the participants were met at the railway station by Professor El Amjad Ennaji who, throughout the day, acted as their able guide through the intricate network of little streets and alleys, medersas and marketplaces in the old town. He had also organized a visit to the Karaouine Library. But alas, Fes was
too big and the day too short. A few of Melcom’s members stayed in Fes, but the others returned the same night to Rabat. Some of them stayed on for a few days to see more of Rabat and Morocco, others had to heed the call of duty, but for all the stay in Morocco had made their participation in the conference an unforgettable and valuable experience.

To this must be added that the Rabat conference was not just a touristic experience for Melcom International’s members, although Morocco clearly provides the ideal setting for just that. The visit of Melcom International in Morocco had much more in it than that. It was the opportunity to make the acquaintance of their colleagues in the Université Mohamed V, the Bibliothèque Générale and the other smaller institutions, all with their rich collections of manuscripts, archives and printed works, and in addition to that the well-organized new and antiquarian book trade of Rabat, the touch of the medieval in Salé, the absolutely stupendous experience of Fes, and last but not least the hospitality and friendliness of our Moroccan colleagues and friends. All this made Melcom International’s journey into Morocco an extremely pleasant and at the same time, from the professional point of view, an absolutely necessary move. (J.J.W.)

Proposed constitution for Melcom International

Melcom International has always been able to do without bureaucracy, and the Board hopes that this will remain the case for a long time. Nevertheless, it was deemed necessary to have at least some basic rules governing the activities of Melcom International. At the Rabat conference of 1992 it was therefore decided that a constitution would be drafted. In the following the Board proposes the draft of a constitution for Melcom International. It is formulated along the lines of the constitution of EURAMES, the European Association for Middle Eastern Studies, of which Melcom International is a member. The draft will be debated at the forthcoming yearly meeting of Melcom International in Birmingham in April 1993.

CONSTITUTION OF MELCOM INTERNATIONAL

Article 1. Name and mission.
Melcom International, the European Association of Middle East Librarians, is a non-governmental organization, devoted to promoting co-operation among individuals and institutions in Europe, North America and the Middle East concerned with all aspects of librarianship, book collecting, the book trade, and publishing.

Article 2. Qualifications.
Melcom International pursues its aims without any discrimination on grounds of race, religion, sex, nationality, or political philosophy.

Article 3. Activities.
Melcom International shall further its aims, for example, by convening a yearly meeting, by encouraging the convening of conferences of a similar or related nature, by promoting exchanges, by organizing comparative research on library matters in Europe and the Middle East, by publishing and circulating a Newsletter, by publishing directories, surveys and studies on Middle East librarianship in the broadest sense, by initiating co-operative projects within an all-European framework aimed at strengthening Middle East librarianship in Europe, and by encouraging and supporting the formation of national associations for Middle East librarianship in European countries.

Article 4. Membership.
Membership of Melcom International is open to individuals and institutions. Applications for membership are made to the Board and acceptance will be at the discretion of the Board. Forcible discontinuation of membership is at the discretion of the Annual Conference on the basis of a proposal by the Board.

Members who fail to pay their membership fees automatically lose their membership at the end of the year for which they have failed to pay.

Article 5. Structure.
1. Melcom International has two institutions, the Board and the Annual Conference.
2. The Board consists of three members, a President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. They are of different European nationalities and based in different European countries. They have appointments in institutions which deploy activities in the same field as Melcom International. The members of the Board are Melcom International’s executive officers. They are elected by the Annual Conference for a term of three years.
3. The President represents Melcom International internally and externally. The President presides over Melcom International’s conferences.
The Secretary is responsible for the tasks of coordination with the collaborators of the libraries who host Melcom International's conferences, and coordinates the flow of information between the members. More specifically, the Secretary oversees all Melcom International's administrative matters and mailings. The Treasurer is responsible for accounting for Melcom International's income and expenses.

4. The Annual Conference consists of all paying individual members of Melcom International. Institutional members cannot vote. All resolutions and decisions of the Annual Conference are taken with an absolute majority of the votes, except when otherwise stated in this Constitution.

5. Observing participants are freely admitted to Melcom International's conferences and meetings. They have no voting rights. They may not interfere with the elections.

6. Each year the Board will be answerable to the Annual Conference for its activities. After approval by the Annual Conference the Board will be discharged of its responsibility for the past year.

7. Half a year before the term of the Board has expired, elections for a new Board are organized. Elections for the membership of the Board may be held during the yearly meeting, or at any other time in the year by mail. The elections are organized by the Board.

8. The Board proposes candidates for a new Board. The Annual Conference can also propose candidates for the Board from among the members of Melcom International. The Annual Conference must propose candidates for the entire Board. If no candidates are proposed by the Annual Conference, the Board's candidates are considered to have been elected unopposed.

9. The treasurer and secretary of Melcom International will establish a list of those members of Melcom International who have voting rights before each election. For an election which will take place during a yearly meeting this list can be amended during the yearly meeting itself. For an election by mail the list cannot be amended once it has been established on the basis of Melcom International's financial and administrative records.

10. The Annual Conference confirms the new Board on the basis of the election results.

11. The Board provides, if and when necessary, for a mid-term replacement of any of its members. The replacement is subject to approval afterwards by the Annual Conference.

1. All European languages may be used for Melcom International's proceedings, documents and mailings. The Board can decide in specific cases to limit the number of languages actually employed.
2. In case of any dispute arising from the interpretation of translations of this Constitution the English version will prevail.

Article 7. Amendments to the Constitution.
The Constitution of Melcom International can be changed by the Annual Conference during the yearly meeting only. Amendments are considered to have been accepted when they are supported by two-thirds of the given votes.

Article 8. Place of registration.
The Board may decide to legally register Melcom International in any of the towns or cities where the Board's members are based.

Article 9. General provisions.
The Board has the authority to decide in all matters that are not foreseen in the Constitution, subject to approval afterwards by the Annual Conference.

Invitation to the 15th conference of Melcom International (Birmingham 1993)

The 15th conference of Melcom International will be held in Westhill College, Selly Oak, Birmingham from Monday 5 till Wednesday 7 April 1993. Melcom's host in Birmingham is Mrs. Meline Nielsen, Central Library, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham B28 6LQ, UK (telephone: +4421 472 4231; fax: +4421 472 8852). Melcom International's secretary has already circulated a first mailing concerning the Birmingham conference.

Papers are invited on all subjects of Middle Eastern librarianship. Subjects suggested at earlier conferences, such as statistics of price developments for books and journals, the overhead costs for the maintenance and use of Middle Eastern collections, the position of Middle East collections in larger institutions, library automation and Middle Eastern collections, and other topics, may be given attention as well.

A few dates and other basic information: Registration forms are to be returned to Melcom International's secretary, Mrs. Françoise Barrès-Kotobi, Institut d'Études Iranienes, Université Paris III, 13 rue de Santeuil, F-75231 Paris Cedex 05, France (telephone (+33 1) 45.87.40.69; fax: (+33 1) 45.87.40.70) before 15 February 1993, as no second invitation...
will be circulated. Title of paper (in English or French) to be submitted before 19 March 1993. If you do not intend to participate, you are nevertheless invited to send current information about your activities to the editors of this Newsletter before 5 March 1993. This information will be summarily published in the next Newsletter which will be distributed during the conference. Lodging at the campus of Westhill College. Price of a single room + 3 meals £ 32.00; a single room + breakfast £ 17.50. There are double rooms available as well. Lunch at the campus of Westhill College for £ 6.70 and dinner for £ 7.95.

In Selly Oak several restaurants have dinners for prices ranging between approximately £ 8 and £ 15. All reservations and further information are directly available from Melcom International’s secretary.

Possibilité pour chambre à deux personnes. Dîner au campus de Westhill College pour £ 6.70 et le dîner pour £ 7.95. A Selly Oak il y a plusieurs restaurants agréables pour le repas du soir de £ 8 à £ 15. Pour toutes réservations et plus d’information vous êtes priés de contacter directement la secrétaire du Melcom International.

Résultats des élections du bureau du Melcom International (juillet 1991)

Résultats:

adhésions: 50
votes non exprimés: 21
votes nuls: 8
votes exprimés: 21

Ont été élus:
- président: Jan Just Witkam (20 voix)
- secrétaire: Françoise Barrès-Kotobi (14 voix)
- trésorière: Jill Butterworth (7 voix)

Les trois élus ont donné leur accord et vous remercient.
La transmission officielle des mandats devait avoir lieu à la Conférence de Fes qui a été annulée. Les nouveaux élus ont pris donc leurs responsabilités à partir de 1er octobre 1991.
La Conférence Annuelle de Melcom International XIV réunie à Rabat confirme la composition du bureau.

Jan Just Witkam, le président
Françoise Barrès-Kotobi, la secrétaire
Jill Butterworth, la trésorière.

Subscription to this Newsletter

Number 2 of this Newsletter will be distributed to the participants of the conference in Birmingham from 5-7 April 1993. Whoever is unable to attend the conference but wishes to receive future issues is requested to notify the editors. For the time being the Newsletter will be distributed free to a large number of interested librarians. In order to cut down costs of production and distribution it is requested from the readers that they (re)confirm their interest after having received this Newsletter.