

MELCom International 37th annual conference

Minutes of the Business meeting held on

Thursday, 30th April 2015, at the Université Constantine 2 – Abdelhamid Mehri in Algeria



Agenda/ Ordre du jour:

1. **President's assessment of the conference (Geoffrey Roper for Helga Rebhan)**
2. **Secretary's report (Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb)**
3. **Treasurer's report (Andreas Drechsler for Farzaneh Zareie)**
4. **MI's Website**
5. **Future conferences**
6. **Discussion Panel on cooperation networks between MELCom Intl/MELA (Azzedine Bouderbane and Nadjia Gamouh, Algeria)**
7. **Professional announcements**
8. **Any Other Business**

1. President's assessment of the conference (Geoffrey Roper for Helga Rebhan)

President Dr Helga Rebhan, who could not attend for imperative personal reasons, was graciously represented by Dr Geoffrey Roper (Independent bibliographer, Ex-Editor of the Index Islamicus and longest standing member of the MELCom International present).

Geoffrey Roper first read out the thankful statement issued by Helga Rebhan and chaired the business meeting.

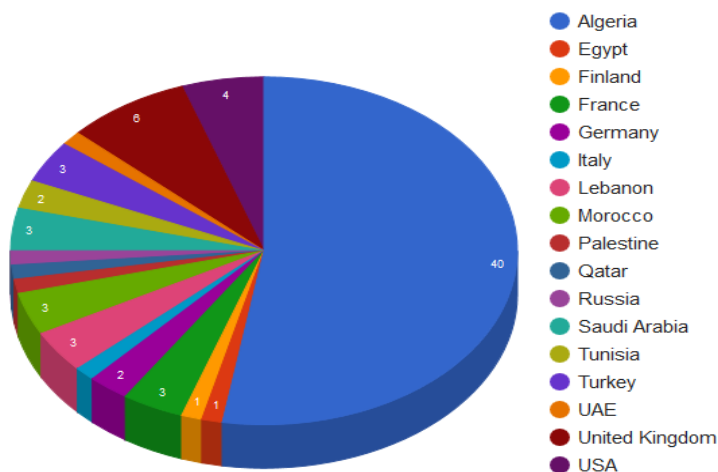
In her statement Helga Rebhan reiterated her apologies and deep regret for not being able to attend this most anticipated meeting, that would be hosted for the first time since its beginning in Algeria. She also thanked most heartily Professor Mohamed El Hadi Latreche, Rector of the University A. Mehri, University of Constantine 2, Mme Halima Ali-Khodja, Director of Constantine Cultural Heritage Office, the local organisers, Professors Azzedine Bouderbane and Nadjia Gamouh and all their helpers for their enormous work, especially considering some of the great logistical and administrative constraints they had to deal with, and for the tremendous generosity and friendliness they extended to all attendees of the MELCom International. This conference in Constantine has proved to be a most memorable one as it had been for many their first visit to this enchanting country, at the most auspicious time, when Constantine was celebrated as Capital of Arab Culture.

2. Secretary's report (Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb)

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb thanked Prof Bouderbane and Prof Gamouh, their colleagues and students for all their work and the very pleasant collaboration towards the organisation of this conference, which was hallmarked by the utmost hospitality and generosity. She also addressed her most heartfelt thanks to all the members of the association who came forward to help in the absence of her fellow board members: Geoffrey Roper, Andreas Drechsler, Yasmin Faghihi and Wasseem Farooq were instrumental in the smooth delivery of the conference and business meeting.

She gave then a brief report on the conference, which saw 49 attendees coming from 14 countries of work (see graph below for details of those countries). The conference was held in the main amphitheatre of the University Constantine 2 – Abdelhamid Mehri and was hosted by the staff and students of the Institute of Librarianship and the NTIRDN Centre of Research.

Attendees repartititon MI 2015



21 papers were presented on the following themes:

- Algerian libraries & collections
- Cataloguing policies and practices
- Manuscripts, rare books and documents: describing, cataloguing, preserving them
- Manuscripts cataloguing & digitization projects
- Manuscripts and rare documents in the Balkans
- Press and libraries
- Protecting and diffusing Middle East Collections

The papers drove lots of interest and stimulation, and this conference has been a very welcome opportunity to meet and learn from our colleagues in Algeria about specific issues that libraries and librarians are facing there.

It had also been the occasion as per usual for individuals from very different backgrounds and perspectives to meet and instruct each others on their differences, while sharing a strong sense of a community of interests. The reduced number of attendees, mostly due to administrative difficulties, actually worked in our favour as it strengthened the familial atmosphere and attendees could spend more time in informal discussions.

The programme of the conference included a tour of the Constantine famous bridges and gorges, a guided visit of the Palace of the Ahmed Bey in Constantine's Old City, and a visit of the Library collections of the University of the Islamic Sciences Emir Abdelkader in Constantine.

The three-day conference was followed by an excursion in the ancient and exceptionally preserved Roman town of Timgad, in the Aurès Mountains at 125 km south of Constantine.

Publication of papers

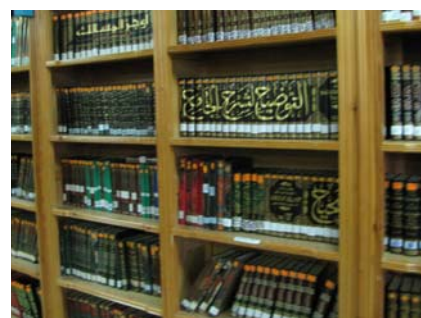
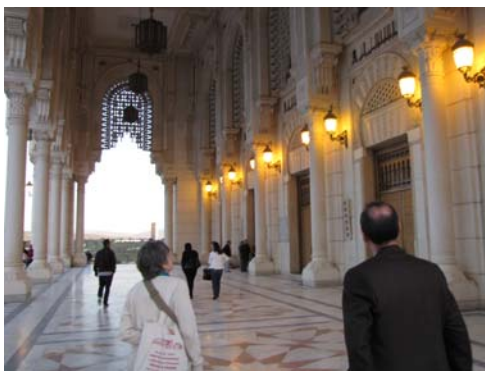
Finally, the Secretary asked the speakers to send in their papers in electronic format (Word, Powerpoint, PDF, etc.) to melcom.international@gmail.com in order to have them posted on the website and gave September as a reasonable deadline. Those submitting their presentation should make sure to add some explanatory text if they choose to send their presentations slides.

Pictures of the conference

Dominique A-S. also asked attendees who wished to share their pictures of the conference on the website to send them to her (melcom.international@gmail.com) or directly to the MI webmasters (1sarayonatan@gmail.com) .

Pictures of the conference will be made available on a Flickr album, which will be circulated to the conference attendees.





Discussion list

She also urged everyone to subscribe to the group list “lis-middle-east” (and advertise it to colleagues) in order to be informed of the annual conferences, among other information on MI. She reminded that people can also refer to the MI website, which will host all information regarding the association’s activities.

3. Treasurer’s report (Andreas Drechsler for Farzaneh Zareie)

Farzaneh Zareie, the Treasurer of MI, who could not attend for administrative reasons, was graciously represented by Andreas Drechsler (from the Bamberg University Library in Germany). Andreas reported on the financial standing of the association.

The balance brought forward on the MELCom International account on 28th May was **€ 7032,27.** / Au 28 mai 2014 le solde du compte MELCom International était créditeur de 7032,27 €.

The following is a short account of the conference collected fees, expenses that MI had to bear, and the amount to carry forward.

Income = **1450 €**

The current conference received 49 participants among which 5 were from the publishing sector, and 12 were registered as students or guests (free).

Expenses = **1150 €**

The conference had to bear the following expenses:

- a. 2 grants : €900 ;
- b. miscellaneous expenses (account maintenance; website hosting costs; guests at the conference dinner; etc.) : ca. €250

There was a positive balance of 300 Euros this year. The balance brought forward as of 30th May 2015 = **€ 7332.7**

7032.27 €	(balance brought forward on 28/05/2014)
+1450 €	(conference fees collected in April 2015)
- 1150 €	(expenses occurred in year 2014-2015)
7332.7 €	(balance brought forward on 30/05/2015)

4. MI Website (D. Akhoun-Schwarb for Sara Yontan & David Musnik, Webmasters)

As Sara Yontan was unable to attend this conference, the Secretary took notes of the suggestions that were made regarding the MI website in her place.

She reminded everyone to keep an eye on the MI website where announcements concerning MELCom International are to be posted: www.melcominternational.org

The attendees were then asked to make remarks and suggestions concerning the website.

Yasmin Faghihi suggested that we add the second circular much earlier on the website to ensure that prospective attendees can plan their travel and stay within comfortable delays. The Secretary mentioned that the second circular with all the practical details of the conference attendance was only sent to the prospective attendees individually and in the best delays (as soon as all information is gathered from the local organisers) and was usually not posted on the website. On the other hand, the Board has always tried and will continue to endeavour to mount the programme of the conference as early as possible.

5. Discussion Panel on cooperation networks between MELCom Intl/MELA (instigated by Azzedine Bouderbane and Nadjia Gamouh, Algeria)

Azzedine Bouderbane opened the discussion by presenting a series of propositions to develop the cooperation between the two main organisations of librarians for the Middle East, namely the MELA (based in the USA) and the MELCom International (based in Europe). Among those, he proposed that both associations:

- Organise common conferences,
- Develop common projects,
- Offer collaborative training for librarians,
- Share their publications,
- Translate all their working documents in English and French.

Prof. Bouderbane suggested the following strategies to build up this cooperation network:

- One member belonging to both associations would be present at both meetings and channel the communication between both;
- Channels of communication would open with IFLA and AFLI ;
- The MELCom International should develop a more aggressive marketing strategy.

The discussion was then opened to the floor.

David Hirsch, Middle East Librarian at UCLA (USA) and active member of the MELA himself, went on to present the MELA to the rest of the assembly, as many of whom never had the opportunity to attend a MELA meeting. He mentions that MELA, unlike MELCom Intl, had several facets and activities: it offers a (shorter) conference, several workshops throughout the year on various aspects of Middle Eastern librarianship and it publishes its own publication: the MELA Notes.

He pointed out that one of the main obstacles to a more vigorous cooperation between both associations was logistics: it is simply too expensive to come to both meetings for most of us, and very few would have the financial backing of their institutions to do so.

Geoffrey Roper and David Hirsch mentioned that previous collaboration has been contemplated, notably during the second WOCMES in Jordan (2006), but this failed through as the local organiser of this joint MELA/MELCom meeting vanished in Amman, and both associations had to find alternatives meeting places in their respective geographical areas.

Laila Hussein Moustafa suggested the development of online conferences (via Skype for example). Andreas Dreschler pointed that this would require an extremely sophisticated timetabling and some heavy IT support.

David Hirsch cited the discussions lists as one example of successful cooperation, as many members

of MELA and MELCom are registered on both discussions lists.

Yasmin Faghihi mentioned the exact opposite development in the example of the recent “divorce” between MELCom UK and BRISMES (British Society for Middle Eastern Studies).

She went on to suggest that attendees from non-European countries could contribute to the flow of communication between Libraries associations by translating from and into the main languages of the MENA and Central Asia region (Arabic, Turkish, Persian, etc.) the papers submitted in the Middle East libraries forums, either in Europe or in the Middle East/North Africa.

Fatmeh Charafeddine signalled that MELA and MI know each other and have already strong ties. She would be interested to see more cooperation networks established among the Middle Eastern librarians in the Middle East itself. Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb enquired whether AFLI was not doing this job already, but Fatmeh Charafeddine responded that AFLI did not function as a networking platform.

Geoffrey Roper concluded the discussion by highlighting the fact that both MELA and MI were open to each other and added for the record that MELA, founded in November 1972, had actually modelled itself on the Melcom UK association, who was founded in June 1967...

6. Future conferences

2016 : Dr Arnoud Vrolijk and Ms Birte Kristiansen are inviting the 38th MELCom International conference to their home institution, the **Library of the University of Leiden** in the Netherlands (<http://library.leiden.edu>). Geoffrey Roper read out the formal invitation issued to the MI’s President Helga Rebhan, by the University Librarian and Director of Leiden University Libraries, Kurt De Belder.

The dates for the 38th MELCom International are 30th May-1st June 2016 (with an excursion taking place on Thursday 2nd June 2016).

2017 : Yasmin Faghihi proposed to host the 39th MELCom International conference at the **Cambridge University Library** in the United Kingdom, and briefly exposed the reasons that would make this proposition an excellent one. Doing so, she mentioned the fact that in 2017 the MELcom UK, which is the root association from which MELCom International emerged, would be celebrating its 50th anniversary, and it would be but very appropriate to celebrate this by holding the MI conference in Cambridge where MELCom UK was born.

Geoffrey Roper thanked this institution and their representatives for their invitations. He reminded the future hosts that official letters of intention are to be addressed from institution officials to the MI presidency, confirming these invitations.

7. Professional Announcements

[Yasmin Faghihi \(Cambridge University Library, UK\)](#) informed us that Cambridge University Faculties of Asian Studies and Middle Eastern Studies were merging into one (Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies).

She encourages the training and placement of library students, especially those interested in Middle

East collections, even though it does involve a lot of work.

Laila Hussein Moustafa (Library of University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, USA) announced the creation of a new committee for endangered collections, to help librarians to get training on dealing with such collections and take preventive actions. MELA /MESA would be offering a joint workshop on this theme.

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb (Library of SOAS University of London, UK) advertised the forthcoming Libraries Round-Table (Table-Ronde Bibliothèques) at the issue of the GIS MOMM (« Moyen-Orient et mondes musulmans ») first congress in Paris, 6th-9th July 2015. For more details, see the programme of the congress: <http://majlis-remomm.fr/le-congres-du-gis/programme-du-congres>. The report will be published online. [see <http://majlis-remomm.fr/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/CR-Table-ronde-bibliothe%CC%80ques-GIS.pdf>].

Marie-Geneviève Guesdon (Bibliothèque nationale de France) announced the launch of the “Profession Culture” Programme. “Profession Culture” is a residency program in France for culture professionals from abroad. At the Bibliothèque nationale de France, the program is aimed at researchers, creators, artists and any cultural professional whose research theme is connected with the Library, its collections, its services and its projects. It is designed to promote exchanges of expertise and to establish long-term links. Application deadline is November 2015.

8. Any Other Business : none.

The Business meeting was then concluded with reiterated thanks from the board of the MI to the organisers for a very successful and enjoyable conference and all the attendees for their participation in this 37th conference, and their expressed wishes to see them all again in Leiden next year.
