

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**JOAN BIELLA RECEIVES  
PARTINGTON AWARD FOR 2013**

NEW ORLEANS, LA, (Oct. 9) – Senior and junior colleagues in the Middle East Librarians Association (MELA) paid tribute to Dr. Joan Biella, recently retired senior descriptive cataloger at the Library of Congress and recipient of this year's David H. Partington Award. The award was presented during MELA's annual meeting, held this month at Loyola University New Orleans.

The David H. Partington Award was established to recognize members of MELA who have displayed a high standard of excellence, with accomplishments in the field of Middle East librarianship, librarianship in general, and scholarship; and who have given outstanding service to the association.

Dr. Biella recently retired from her position at the Library of Congress after a long and remarkable career spanning close to 40 years as a cataloger of non-Roman-script library materials, in particular Judaica and Hebraica and Arabic materials. After earning her PhD in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University, Joan went on to work at the libraries of the W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem, Princeton University, and the University of Chicago, before joining the Library of Congress.

In the course of her long career Joan has been an active member of MELA and has given diligent and outstanding service to the association and to the profession at large. She served as President of MELA in 2007-2008 and also took part in the work of MELA committees, in particular on the Committee on Cataloging, where she served as the ex-officio representative of the Library of Congress. According to her colleagues, Joan's vision and insightful advice, her contributions to the Committee's discussions and decisions, as well as her hard work, including presentations at many MELA meetings and workshops, have left an enduring mark on the Cataloging Committee's achievements and on the field of Middle East librarianship.

It was Joan who initiated the process of what grew to become the Arabic NACO Manual, an indispensable tool for catalogers. Following the introduction of the new RDA standard for cataloging, she volunteered to produce a guide on RDA cataloging for Arabic materials and Hebrew materials. She has also contributed to the development of LC Romanization tables for a number of languages and scripts, such as Judaeo-Arabic, Ladino, and Syriac,

Her doctoral dissertation, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic, Sabaean Dialect*, published in 1982 in the series Harvard Semitic Studies, remains one of the standard references in the field. Joan has also published a number of papers related to cataloging, such as: "A Case Study in Arabic Authority Names" (1994), "The/My Philosophy of Romanization" (2004), and "The RDA Test and Hebraica Cataloging: Applying RDA in One Cataloging

Community” (2011). One has to read these articles to appreciate the profound learning, warmth, wit and good humor of the author, qualities that have also characterized her interactions with colleagues.

As a cataloging specialist, Joan has been a great mentor who has supported aspiring catalogers and guided them through the learning process. A former colleague attests that he received from Joan “an excellent foundation in cataloging and authority work.” Another stated that “Joan’s review of RDA MARC records was beyond exceptional, and her teaching style was impeccable, thorough, and very responsive.”

Dr. Biella’s scholarship and her major contributions to the field and its literature have benefited librarians, catalogers, and library users in the United States and around the world. The Middle East Librarians Association is proud to honor Dr. Joan Biella and thanks her for her service to the profession.

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