MELA Notes

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MIDDLE EAST LIBRARIANS ASSOCIATION

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membership information or subscriptions to Marsha McClintock,
Secretary-Treasurer MELA, Ohio State University Main Li-
brary, 1858 Neil Avenue Mall, Columbus, Ohio 43210.

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ALA-SAN FRANCISCO

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

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

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

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

During the question and answer period opinions were expressed concerning the upgrading of materials from scholarly presses, Africana, and the English-non-English distinction, which gave different priorities to materials of the same intellectual quality. Judith Nadler asked who would be responsible for minimal level cataloging. The response was that this would be handled by preliminary catalogers.
James Agenbro, Library of Congress systems analyst, then spoke on new developments in developing the technology for automating East Asian (Chinese, Japanese, and Korean) scripts, per the LC/RLG 1979 agreement. When asked about Arabic script he said that none was going on-line in the original script now but that OCLC was thinking about the problems, the major one being producing right-to-left and left-to-right on the same line.

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

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

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

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

Background

When the first standard English edition of ISBD(M) appeared in April 1974, the early applications of it to
Arabic Works took place in different libraries and agencies; by the end of the same year, at least several hundred entries were prepared for Arabic books according to ISBD (M). Steady application, however, was not by any Arab agency or library, but rather by the Library of Congress. Since the preferred language and alphabet in the U.S. are English and Roman script, both of which differ in some facets from the Arabic language and alphabet, it was expected that certain aspects of LC application would be denied by the Arab agencies and libraries. In general, LC application, though it may be accepted by Arab national agencies as far as areas 1, 2, and 3 (title and authorship statement; edition; and imprint) are concerned with a few exceptions, LC application in areas 4 and 6 (collation; and notes) is completely denied by those agencies. As to areas 5 and 7 (series, and ISBN), LC application is not denied completely, but still needs some modification in order to be accepted by the Arab agencies.

Arab application of ISBD (M) to Arabic books is not yet a steady one, for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that both ISBD (M) editions of 1974 and 1978 are full of European-biased backgrounds and instructions. This is particularly true with the English language and Roman alphabet. That bias, combined with limited human resources able to work with ISBD in any form, lack of rules, interpretations and working manuals designed particularly for ISBD use, and general low standard technical functions in most Arab libraries, creates serious obstacles against the faithful efforts sponsored by the Arab League Education, Culture, and Science Organization (ALECSO) for promotion of ISBD (M) use in Arab countries. Working with ALECSO from the very beginning for this purpose, Dr. Saad M. El-Hagrassy realized in 1976 that it was imperative to have an empirical study of the whole situation, i.e., the internal characteristics of the ISBD (M), particularly its English-biased mode; scattered Arab applications of ISBD (M), whether the IFLA Version or the Anglo-American version in AACR chapter 6; non-Arabic application by LC from September 1974 through December 1980. This problem was the topic of my research for the M.L.S. in the University of Cairo, under Dr. Hagrassy's supervision. I have completed the dissertation in Arabic and now present these background notes and suggestions in English.
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Starting with the academic year 1974-1975, the Department of Library and Information Sciences in the University of Cairo translated the ISBD(M) text into Arabic and used it for the graduate and undergraduate courses of descriptive cataloging. Other departments in Arab universities of Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Libya are very willing to teach it as soon as they have staff members qualified for this task. At any rate, the European-biased ISBD(M) text of 1974 and 1978 is recognized here as a discouragement factor for both teaching and application of this international code. Newly graduated Arab librarians have mainly a theoretical concept of the ISBD(M) with very limited practice.

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

About non-Arab application, i.e., the Library of Congress, the findings indicate the highest degree of success measured by stability and professional understanding of the ISBD(M) rules and conventions. This does not mean, however, that LC application should be considered the best pattern for the use of ISBD(M) in Arabic monographs. As a matter of fact, LC application deviates little by little from the ideal pattern. I give here only one example to prove my claim. For the first four or five years, LC used to transcribe for the "At head of title" note, the quoted phrase in Arabic script as it appears in the work itself. Since 1979
or perhaps earlier, LC romanizes the quoted phrase for this note, thus confusing the user who may think that the quoted phrase is printed on the work in a romanized form too. In general, LC has more and more over-romanized the Arabic parts of the description, assuming that gradually this is the easy, pragmatic way to execute its policy concerning the complete computerization of all bibliographic records in the library.

Suggestions

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

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

Rule (0.8) concerning the necessity of using capital form for the initial letters of the first words in all areas in addition to the first letter of "General material designation" again addresses itself to those languages having both
forms, capital and small. Arabic and other languages do not have dual formats of letters. It is suggested, therefore, that the Rule (0.8) be rephrased to avoid such biased-addressed conventions.

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

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

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

BIBLIOGRAPHIC CONTROL OF KURDISH LITERATURE by Wolfgang Behn

Western ideas and concepts have reached even the most isolated segments of the people in the Middle East. The Kurds, who until quite recently have been living on the fringes of modern Middle East society, have become increasingly exposed to modern western nationalism. Of course, the origins of the Kurds' aspirations for national independence date back to the nineteenth century. Contemporary Kurdish hope reached its height when in the Treaty of Sevres (1920) provision was made for an autonomous Kurdistan. However,
in the Treaty of Lausanne (1924), which superseded the Treaty of Sevres, no mention was made of this promise.

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

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

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

'Ali al-Dīn Sājjādī, Nābzū adabī Kurdī (Baghdad, 1952) is more of a history of Kurdish literature than a bibliography, particularly as it lacks an index. Some three hundred Kurdish works published anywhere are contained in Kitāb Khānay Kurdī by Muṣṭafā Nārīmān (Kirkuk, 1960); it cites mainly literary texts and translations, but some religious and ethnographic works are included. Zh. S. Musaelian, Bibliografīa po kurduveniču (Moscow, 1963), lists monographs and periodical articles in a classified arrangement, subdivided chronologically; more than half of the 2,768 entries represent Russian language material. The comprehen-
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sive ISK's Kurdish bibliography edited by Silvio van Rooy and Kees Tamboer (Amsterdam, International Society Kurdistan, 1968, 2 vols.), though classified, is not exactly practical on account of the extremely broad subject headings. For example, under the heading IRAN/Kurds some 400 references published up to 1946 are listed, without further subdivisions. This writer's The Kurds in Iran: a selected and annotated bibliography (London, 1977) continues where the preceding work left off, filling the gap between 1966 and 1975 as far as monographs are concerned. A complementary work is Elizabeth E. Lytle's Bibliography of the Kurds, Kurdistan, and the Kurdish question (Monticello, Ill., 1977. Exchange Bibliography 1301), citing predominantly periodical articles of serials not included in J.D. Pearson's Index Islamicus. Whereas half the titles in The Kurds in Iran are in non-western languages, Lytle's work covers almost exclusively western language material. The latest publication is Bibliyogrfiya al-kutub al-Kurdiyah, 1787-1975 by Mustafa Sayyi'd Ahmad Nazim (Baghdad, 1979). Listing 1,254 items arranged chronologically according to the years of the Christian era. It has a Kurdish as well as Arabic introduction. A classified list of the Kurdish books in the Central Library of the University of Sulaimaniya is entitled Lislav bibiliyogrfiya kitaba Kurdiyakan kitabkhannay Zankoy Silmami (Sulaimaniyah, 1977, v. 1). The most recent publication is "Mar'ut al-Barzani's Laskilinaha bibliyog- grfiya chiroki Kurd, 1925-1969 (Baghdad, 1978), containing a bibliography of Kurdish fiction arranged by title.

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

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

Looking at these bibliographies it is apparent that the secondary literature is adequately covered. Bibliographic control of the literature in Kurdish remains unsatisfactory. Most of the reference works are either poorly organized (Nariman) or outright misleading (Sörän). Very few are arranged analytically. Frequently western and Russian
titles have been translated freely into Kurdish in order to accommodate them in an Arabic bibliographical straight-jacket. If these works are indexed at all, the author index has to be used with ingenuity as western writers are sometimes entered under their forenames without any reference from their family names. A desideratum of high priority is a reliable, comprehensive bibliography of Kurdish literature.

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

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

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

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

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

28 alphabetic characters: ٚ - ٨
3 additional characters: ة ی

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

*This report is taken from a memorandum from Deemer to University of Petroleum and Minerals library staff. -ed.
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For use in computers, Arabic (and Roman) script characters are represented internally as binary codes. For transmission of coded data between computers, codes should be standardized. Earlier efforts at coding for Arabic frequently used more than one code per character in order to represent variant shapes (١٠). The use of "context analysis" permits the appropriate shape to be determined from context. Participants generally agreed that character values (i.e., ١٠) should be represented internally on a one to one basis, except for hamza ( ج ). This character is represented by 4 different codes, depending on its seat. Although context analysis could be used to determine the proper seat for a uniquely coded hamza, this is possible only with full and correct vowel signs ( ١٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠٠ ), which may not be present in all uses. Participants agreed to compromise the principle of one character = one code in this case. The CODAR-U 7-bit code was recommended for evaluation as a suitable standard for the Arabic script character set. Testing of CODAR-U compatible equipment will take place between now and September, when recommendations should be made to the ALESCO conference to be held in Amman.

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

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

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

Research already conducted suggests that improvements
of as much as 200% in typing efficiency may be possible.

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

The official resolution of the Symposium reads:

It is resolved:

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

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

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

SASO, like any other Arab national standardization organization, is empowered to recommend to ALESCO and ASMO any modification to the CODAR-U scheme wherever desirable, while respecting the general framework of a unified Arabic code.
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FIRST CONFERENCE OF SAUDI LIBRARIANS
by Ahmad Ashfaq and Simon Samoeil*

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

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

1. Manpower problems
2. Interlibrary cooperation in the sphere of technical services
3. Public libraries in the Kingdom
4. Cooperation with international library and documentation institutions and organizations
5. Library automation

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

*This report first appeared in University of Petroleum & Minerals' Library Scene, 5:2 (August 1980). It has been edited slightly for MELA Notes. -ed.
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There are two library schools in the Kingdom - one at King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah and the other at Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud University in Riyadh which provide professional education to Saudi Secondary School graduates. In addition, the Institute of Public Administration in Riyadh conducts short-term in-service training courses for Saudi librarians. However, for various reasons, the potential of these three schools is not being exploited fully.

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

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

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

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

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

Of historic significance is the decision of the Conference to form a library association in the Kingdom which would give an impetus and serve as a nucleus for the promotion and development of library services in the Kingdom. The publication of a library journal was also promoted.

It was also decided that urgent measures should be taken to resuscitate the National Library in order that it may play its rightful role as do national libraries else-
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where in the world. Especially, there was stressed the publication of a national bibliography without which bibliographical control over the intellectual output of the nation is inconceivable. In this context a deposit law for the Kingdom was also discussed. A committee has been appointed to look into the problems connected with the National Library.

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

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

COLLABORATION

The following report comes to us from Wolfgang Behn.

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

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

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

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

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

NEWS OF MEMBERS

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THREE MEMBERS have contributions to the first issue of Mundus Arabicus, a new annual devoted to Arabic literature. Mundus Arabicus debuts with a volume on mahjir writers. Fawzi Abdulrazak and Francine McNulty have prepared bibliographies of works in Arabic and western languages respectively. George Atiyeh has contributed a study of Shukri al-Khurî's Fînîyûnû. Copies are available from Dar Mahjar, F.O. Box 56, Cambridge, MA. 02238. Price is $22.00 plus postage for individuals; $30.00 plus postage for institutions. No personal checks accepted.

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