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EDITOR

Marlis J. Saleh
University of Chicago

REVIEW EDITOR

Rachel Simon
Princeton University

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Address correspondence regarding subscriptions, dues, or membership information to:

William Kopycki, Secretary-Treasurer MELA
Unit 64900 Box 26
APO AE 09839
United States of America

Address articles and other notices to:

Marlis J. Saleh
Editor, *MELA Notes*
University of Chicago Library
1100 East 57th Street
Chicago, IL 60637
E-mail: melanoteseditor@mela.us
Phone: (773) 702-8425
Fax: (773) 753-0569

Address books for review to:

Rachel Simon
Review Editor, *MELA Notes*
Catalog Division
Princeton Univ. Library
1 Washington Road
Princeton, NJ 08544
E-mail: rsimon@Princeton.EDU

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Public Programming at a US University Library: Practical Lessons from *Muslim Journeys*

DEBORAH J. MARGOLIS
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES

Introduction

As Middle East Studies librarians, we spend our time building collections, cataloging resources, teaching students, answering reference questions, consulting and collaborating with faculty. Why add public programming to our list of duties? By public programming, I mean events which are held at the library, most often lectures or film screenings, which are open to the campus and to the larger community.

Libraries have a unique role in the campus and in the community, as neutral spaces where people can, individually, learn about anything they wish. At library events, people come together as a community to learn about topics of civic or cultural importance, in a place that is not promoting any one view. Academic librarians routinely connect people with library materials, through instruction, reference, cataloging, exhibitions, and other types of work. Public programming is an additional way that we as librarians can link faculty, students, community, and collections. At our institution, public programming supports the land-grant mission for the university to engage with the community beyond the campus. It is my personal hope that these efforts, particularly those related to Islam and/or the Middle East, make the fabric of our communities stronger.

In the remainder of this article I will provide practical advice on organizing public programming, using examples from the National Endowment for the Humanities' (NEH) *Muslim Journeys* initiative (www.programminglibrarian.org/muslimjourneys). *Muslim Journeys* was a two-phase grant-funded program which was implemented in US libraries from 2012 to 2014. The first phase was *Muslim Journeys Bookshelf*, which provided a small collection of books and DVDs to grantees. Grantee libraries were obligated to provide one public program related to the *Bookshelf* collection. The second phase

was *Let's Talk About It: Muslim Journeys*, a five-session, scholar-led book discussion program, where participants read five books from the *Muslim Journeys Bookshelf* collection, centered around a particular theme.

Campus and Community Partners

As academic librarians, our natural partners are the research/teaching faculty on campus with whom we work (in our case, the MSU Muslim Studies Program). It is essential to involve these faculty members in library programming, for multiple reasons. First, they are closely connected with topics of current scholarly and, in many cases, popular interest. They will have suggestions of films to screen, speakers to bring, research to discuss. They themselves may offer to be a discussant on a panel or after a film. Second, they bring audiences to the program. They may share the program announcement with their colleagues, and, to great effect, offer extra credit to their students for participating in the library event. Lastly, working with faculty on public programming with faculty has created ongoing, mutually beneficial relationships.

You may wish to look beyond the primary faculty you work with as partners on library programming. Perhaps there is a scholar in a different discipline who might add a new perspective as a presenter. Or perhaps, as on our campus, there is an honors college or other cross-disciplinary program which might wish to enhance its students' experience by advising attendance at library events. Asking other departments or programs to co-sponsor the event will widen exposure for your event. Often the only responsibility of co-sponsors is to advertise the event via their regular channels, although they may also contribute monetarily to the cost of honoraria, the film, or refreshments.

If you wish to attract audiences from beyond campus, community partners are essential to boosting attendance from the general public. Natural partners of academic libraries are public libraries. If you haven't met your local public librarian, meet and discuss ways you might work together. The public librarian can tell their patrons about programming happening at the college/university library, as he or she often knows individual patrons' interests. You and your faculty can also hold events at the public library. For our *Muslim Journeys Bookshelf* grants, we jointly planned film-based events, which took place at our university library and at two of our local public libraries.

Other partners for Middle East- or Muslim/Islamic Studies-related programming would be local houses of worship; civic or political groups interested in international affairs or peace; local arts councils; senior centers, and more. They can post flyers for the library event, note the event in their newsletters, and post on their social media. Our local Islamic Center and local clergy association were instrumental in attracting people from the various faith communities to the *Muslim Journeys* programming. A key partner for humanities programming in the United States is the state humanities council. For the *Muslim Journeys* initiative, our state humanities council provided grantwriting advice, a letter of support for our grant application, and promoted our events.

Advertising the Program

Our library advertises its events via flyers (distributed widely on campus and to local public libraries), social media, local newspapers, and radio. To attract the general public, it is important to note that the library event is “free and open to the public.” If parking is a concern, you will want to note where parking is and whether there is a cost. You also will want to include a statement that accommodations for persons with disabilities can be requested by contacting a specific named person by a certain date.

A great way to attract students and the public alike is to offer refreshments. If you do serve food and drink, put it on your publicity. Refreshments do add another layer of preparation to the event—they have a cost, someone needs to buy them, store them, set them out, and clean them up. But, if one of your goals is to foster community, then food is an essential ingredient for a successful program. Personally greeting visitors as they enter your program room with a warm welcome is also not to be overlooked.

Program Logistics

Many libraries do not have an ideal space for public programming. You want to be sure you have seating for everyone, and that everyone is able to hear the presentation. A microphone is recommended. Even if you or the presenter is convinced that they are loud enough to be heard, this is often not the case, as hearing deficits are common today in both the college-age and retirement-age populations. Be sure to coordinate well in advance with others at your library who may help with set-up and support for the event, including facilities staff and those providing A/V or technical

assistance. At past Muslim Studies-related library events we had been asked for a room in which to pray. Now we will routinely reserve a space near the program room for prayer or reflection.

When choosing a date for an event at your library, be sure to avoid religious holidays. A helpful website is *Interfaith Calendar* (interfaithcalendar.org), which denotes which holidays are considered major in many religions. At a “Big Ten” school like ours, holding library events at the same time as football games is also to be avoided. You may have different local events which would prevent people from attending your library program; be attuned to local interest when setting the date for your event. It’s hard to avoid competing with other events at a large university, but you should attempt to check various calendars.

Promote and Build Your Collection

At our library, public programming has been conceived of as a vehicle to promote library collections. It’s also a great opportunity to add new and interesting materials to your collection. When brainstorming programming ideas for *Muslim Journeys Bookshelf* with a group of Muslim Studies faculty, one faculty member suggested a then-recent documentary, *Wham! Bam! Islam!*, which tells the story of a Kuwaiti psychologist and his comic book series *The 99*, which features Muslim superheroes. Since our library has a notable collection of comic art, this was a great fit for the interests of our library and faculty, and also of interest to students and the general public. We timed the film screening to MSU’s annual Comics Forum conference, and the Comics Forum advertised the screening as the “opening act” of their conference. I acquired as many issues of *The 99* as I could for our comic art collection, and displayed them at the film screening. At the event, I was sure to mention our comic art collection. When you have a captive audience who is waiting for a program to begin, be sure to take a moment to promote your collections.

Film is an excellent way to bring people together: viewers from varied backgrounds have a common experience in watching the film, and the common “text” of the film to discuss. Note that in order to show a film at your library, you need to purchase the film with “public performance rights.” Films with public performance rights often cost in excess of \$200, as opposed to buying the DVD for private home use at \$20. You can also purchase rights for a particular screening by contacting the rights-holder (sometimes the filmmaker

or a distributor). A major distributor who grants rights (for a fee) is Swank Motion Pictures (www.swank.com).

Evaluate the Programming

Let's Talk About It: Muslim Journeys was an intensive series of library programming. Each of five evenings began with a lecture by our project scholar (an MSU Muslim Studies faculty member), followed by book discussion groups led by Muslim Studies graduate students, and concluding with questions and answers. The NEH required that this programming be evaluated, beyond counting numbers of attendees. We devised a survey which we administered after each of the five sessions, both in print and online. Putting together the survey helped us clarify the goals for our local program. And when the results were in, it helped us know that the effort was indeed worth it. Ninety-two percent of participants stated that their knowledge of Islam, Muslims, and/or Islamic civilizations increased as a result of the programming. We indeed had attracted an audience diverse in age and MSU status, bringing together campus and community as we had hoped. We learned that, in our case, the most effective channel of promoting the program was via a librarian, and the least effective channel was through social media. Since this was a series of programs, and not a one-time event, the evaluations gave us information which enabled us to make adjustments along the way. Finally, we received many narrative comments which reinforced our feeling that the programming was a meaningful and positive experience for participants.

Wider Initiatives

If you feel that public programming fits your library's and institution's mission, and is worth costs such as staff time, flyer printing, honoraria, refreshments, and public performance rights, one way to start (or jump-start) programming is to join wider initiatives. A national or international project will often provide resources such as films, books, discussion questions, guidelines for dialogue, public relations materials like graphics and press releases, and a community of support. Unity Productions Foundation's *20,000 Dialogues* (www.20000dialogues.org), which uses film as a basis for learning about Muslims and Islam, is one such initiative that our library has also participated in. The American Library Association's Programming Librarian website (www.programminglibrarian.org)

offers information about grant opportunities for programming, an automated PR generator, and more.

I hope that this article has been useful as you consider organizing public programming at your library. Public programming can be a vehicle to enhance and promote collections, build campus and community relationships, and increase understanding about Islam and/or the Middle East.

REVIEWS

Militant Women of a Fragile Nation. By Malek Abisaab. Middle East Studies Beyond Dominant Paradigms. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2010. Pp. xxxi, 300, with notes, bibliography, index. \$45.00 (cloth). ISBN: 9780815632122.

Malek Abisaab is currently an associate professor of Islamic Studies and History at McGill University. His teaching and research background include modern Middle Eastern history; colonialism and the nation-state; women and resistance; women, work, and family in global perspective; women and war; Wahhabi Islam; labor and gender in the Arab world; Muslim women; and modernity and Islamic movements. He has written several articles for *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*, *Journal of Women of the Middle East and the Islamic World*, and *Journal of Women's History*. He has co-authored a book with Rula Jurdi Abisaab, *The Shi'ites of Lebanon: Modernism, Communism, and Hizbullah's Islamists* (forthcoming).

Abisaab's *Militant Women of a Fragile Nation* reveals the history of workingwomen in Lebanon's tobacco industry. Because little is written about women's labor and militancy in Middle Eastern societies, Abisaab relies on union and party records, as well as newspaper articles, to draw conclusions from "ambiguous" information that pertains to women. To show the nature of women's life in the home and on the shop floor, he also relies on oral history and popular culture. In addition, Abisaab used his own surveys of women and men working in the tobacco industry from 1997, conducted a quantitative analysis of empirical data from the Regie (French tobacco monopoly based in Lebanon), and relied on sociological studies of factory women and men in Lebanon to draw comparisons between women working in tobacco factories and in the textile and food industries.

The book is divided into six chapters, and includes maps, tables, and illustrations. Abisaab's theoretical framework is based on three interconnected ideas. First, when explaining working women's history during a specific historical period, he examines economic,

political, and social variables as a medium of change in cultural values and vice-versa. His second point argues that class and gender are historically connected during labor movements and/or state resistance, and therefore, for an analysis of gender processes, class dynamics must be taken into account. The third point is about patriarchy as it relates to state and society.

In the Introduction, Abisaab reveals women's challenges against the Lebanese state (French colonial rule from the early to the middle of the twentieth century), as well as militant behavior during labor protests. Chapter One discusses the inequalities and control women continued to experience under the patriarchal system because local religious and political leaders were directly involved in the silk factories in which peasant women worked from 1880 to 1935. But when women went to work in the tobacco industry, they began to take charge by leading protests against unemployment—activism strategies which they had learned when protesting against famine in their rural communities.

The next chapter explores the differences between the bourgeois feminists and the tobacco factory women when fighting for their rights. While both fought against French colonial rule, it affected them differently. The former's vision centered around modernized public education and as an outcome, the freedom from seclusion and conjugal marginalization. The latter sought security at the workplace and equal rights with working men in factories.

Chapter Three discusses women forming their first strike committee and their participation in the 1946 strike, which led to the passage of labor laws in Lebanon, although with little effect for women. Abisaab provides evidence of this through interviews and newspaper articles. He attributes the female workers' militancy to their past involvement against colonial rule, learning to fight for their rights against the Regie through legal channels, and differing inequalities at work which encouraged them to strike.

Since women did not gain the rights they fought for, labor militancy continued at the Regie with high frequency, particularly at the Hadath branch from 1954 to 1965. Abisaab argues that the large number of employees in the Hadath factory, the fact that many workers shared common rural poverty, displacement, migration, and sectarian bonds, and the fact of workers becoming accustomed to Beirut's labor activism all contributed to the high number of strikes.

Chapter Five discusses the nature of the Lebanese tribal-sectarian state's involvement through laws which prohibited women from receiving the same rights at work as men and/or provided little legal protection because of the state's paternalistic ideology. Moreover, male industrialists hired male workers over female ones as factories became mechanized because of their biased beliefs that women could not handle such tasks. But at the Regie, women skillfully used kinship, religious and familial ties, and local and national political leaders to gain power there, such as jobs, support related to working conditions, and help with resolving problems with the management.

The last chapter demonstrates yet again women's empowerment to form an alliance; this time with the underprivileged male blue-collar workforce, during the 1963 strike, when they could no longer trust the URWE, the Union of the Regie Workers and Employees. Abisaab shows, with examples, women and men strikers' strategies of using their familial and social and religious sects to gain the support they needed to fight against the state.

The study ends with Abisaab's short summary of each chapter and his remarks about women's militant behavior and its effect on history and society. Anyone who believes that women in the Middle East have never stood up for their rights will think otherwise when they read this well-researched book.

Abisaab defines every Arabic word he uses in his book, which I found useful. He has also personally taken photographs of the Hadath tobacco factory, which provides a clear picture of the working conditions. The bibliography and index are both highly detailed. The audience to which this is directed is scholars of Middle Eastern studies, women's studies, and sociological studies. I definitely recommend this book for academic libraries.

NANCY BEYGHIANIAN

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES

Writing History at the Ottoman Court: Editing the Past, Fashioning the Future. Edited by H. Erdam Cipa and Emine Fetvaci. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013. Pp. 181, with bibliography and index. \$25.00. ISBN: 9780253008640.

Writing History at the Ottoman Court offers a number of fascinating and important contributions to the theme of Ottoman historiography. The book is made up of seven essays, each dealing with a different aspect of writing history at the Ottoman court. All of the scholars involved are young(ish), but they can boast insightful monographs of their own. Indeed, one of the editors, Emine Fetvaci, has just published a companion volume to *Writing History*, entitled *Picturing History at the Ottoman Court*, also published by Indiana University Press. Initially, modern historians thought of the works of Ottoman history writing as sources, providing a reliable account of events and personages. The essays included here are part of the growing interest in foregoing such an approach for an exploration of the literary dimension of the works, to study them as historical phenomenon in their own right. In doing so, they follow in the tracks of scholars such as Paul Witteck, Fuat Koprulu, Halil Inalcik, Victor Menage, Cornell Fleischer, and Cemal Kafadar.

The studies in the book focus on a group of historians and their works from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. (Only one paper, by Hakan T. Karateke, doesn't fit into this time scale.) The studies examine the role of historiography in fashioning Ottoman identity, and institutionalizing dynastic state structure. In keeping with these concerns, the essays are all guided by three themes: the question of audience; the significance and implication of genre in historical writing; and the definition by the Ottomans of who or what is Ottoman. These papers were all originally presented at a symposium at Indiana University on October 30, 2009.

The first essay is by Dimitris Kastritsis. It builds on his work on the Ottoman Civil War of 1402–1413. He discusses the earliest extant source for these years, the anonymous *Ahval-i Sultan Mehmed*. Since it narrates the struggle of Prince Mehmed to defeat his enemies and emerge as the sole ruler during the Ottoman Civil War, usually describing the events soon after they had taken place, and does so in a way decidedly favorable to Mehmed, Kastritsis asserts that the work was written for Mehmed's court, even

before he had established himself as sultan. Further, there is evidence that the work was written to be read aloud.

Unlike the works which made up the great flowering of history writing during the reign of Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512), which share a common preoccupation with explaining the origins of the Ottoman state and the qualities that made it great and were responsible for its standing among other Islamic empires, the *Ahval* is more limited, and recounts in detail only the tumultuous rise to power of Mehmed I in the years following Timur's victory at Ankara. Because large parts of the *Ahval* were incorporated verbatim into later histories, its political and social concerns continued to shape Mehmed's image in Ottoman historiography even down to modern days.

The second essay, by Baki Tezcan, explores the ways in which fourteenth-century historiography reflects the Ottomans' relationship with their former overlords, the Mongols. Tezcan points out that some of the earliest Ottoman historical narratives reflect a different imagining of the Mongols than is the norm later. In the fourteenth century the Mongols are shown as cousins of Ottomans, and their overlords. In this telling, it is through the sponsorship of the Mongols that the Ottomans come to rule in Anatolia. This early tradition seems to have been forgotten or suppressed in the fifteenth-century works because at the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Ottomans had to rebuild their state after their defeat by Timur, a Turco-Mongol, in 1402. Having come close to annihilation by a Mongol, the Ottomans revised their representation of Mongols in their history writing.

Also, in the sixteenth century, the Ottomans embraced a political legitimacy based on their Sunni orthodoxy, and thus they had even more reason to distance themselves from the heterodox Mongols. As noted, from the fifteenth century on, the Seljuks are depicted in Ottoman history writing as the overlords of the earliest Ottomans, and their sponsors to rule as client lords in parts of Anatolia. So whether Mongols or Seljuks, as Tezcan says, "Historiography or the constructive of collective memory, thus seems to be just as creative as literary fiction." (p. 33)

The third essay presents a reading of Celalzade Mustafa's masterful work, *Tabakatu'l-Memelik ve Derecatu'l-Mesalik*. The piece also appears in expanded form in Kaya Şahin's new book, *Empire and Power in the Reign of Suleyman: Narrating the Sixteenth-Century Ottoman World* (CUP, 2013). Mustafa's (d. 1567)

Tabakat focuses on a detailed narrative of Suleyman's reign. It is highly regarded as a source by later Ottoman historians and modern scholars. Textually, it is an elaborate weaving of Arabic, Turkish, and Persian in rhyming prose, and brings together poetic metaphors, historical themes, and religious references. But what is most noteworthy about the work is that it speaks with a new voice, that of the scribal classes of the court, as against the recent converts, *kuls*, and immigrants, who, as we shall see in a later essay, promote their own historiographical depiction of the empire, in order to preserve their own place in it. As Şahin says, "Just as 15th century Ottoman historiography is an ideological debate about the origins of the polity and the meaning of its past, 16th century Ottoman historiography is a series of discussions about the definition of that polity and the meaning of its present." (p. 52) This is further discussed in the next essay.

In the fourth essay Tijana Krstic explores conversion and converts to Islam in Ottoman historiography of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For Krstic, Ottoman historiography during this period shows that Muslim authors were concerned with the phenomenon of conversion to Islam, but also held a variety of views on what was the proper place and role for converts in Ottoman society.

Suleyman's reign saw a growing concern with conversion and religion in general, as a consequence of military and ideological competition with the Safavids and Hapsburgs. In the 1530s and 1540s there were consistent reforms to require stricter adherence to Sunni Islam. Religious pride became an important facet of Ottoman political life. It was an era when one's correct adherence to Islam drew close attention. Despite this growing religiosity, as Krstic sums up: "Ottoman Muslim narrative sources from the 15th and 16th centuries present a variety of perspectives on conversion and converts, suggesting an on-going and evolving debate on the issue throughout the period in question." (p. 73)

Next follows a fascinating essay by Giancarlo Casale about the Mappamundi of Tunuslu Hajji Ahmed. Casale leaves aside the identity(ies) of the maker(s) of the map in order to investigate what the author's map actually says about the world of the sixteenth century and the Ottomans' place in it. As Casale says, "Through the interplay of astrology and geography, and of text and image, Hajji Ahmed uses his map to impose a hierarchical order on world

history—one configured in such a way as to place the Ottoman sultan, because of his particular location in space and time, at the celestial apex of world rulership.” (p. 83) The audience for the map are that group of recent converts, *kuls*, and immigrants and such who are the subject of Kristic’s essay. They want to see a particular situation in the empire which would justify their privileged position, and ensure that it will continue, despite the opposition of the Ottoman Muslim classes. So the Ottoman state as shown on the Mappamundi is the greatest “European Empire,” its ruler the heir of Alexander the Great. But the European Alexander thesis was challenged by highly literate, madrasah-trained, freeborn Muslims, like Celalzade Mustafa, who were eager to promote their own definition of imperial identity, which rather than celebrating a historical link with Europe was more emphatically linked to Islam.

The sixth essay presents a visual analysis of the *Shahnama-yi Ali Osman* by the first court *shahnameci*, Arif. In 1558 he presented the first volume of his world history, which dealt with the pre-Islamic biblical prophets, as well as leading figures from Iranian mythic history. It was called the *Anbiyanama*. In the text and especially in its illustrations, God’s relationship with his prophets is clearly shown. Adam is portrayed as receiving both the special knowledge with which God had favored him, and the political authority which God has also given him. This is symbolized in the double crown Adam is seen wearing in the miniatures of the *Anbiyanama*. One crown stands for spiritual authority and the other for political authority. As the essay’s author, Fatma Sinem Eryilmaz, explains, this is similar to the symbolism of the crown which the Grand Vizier Ibrahim Paşa ordered for Sultan Suleyman in 1533, and it has the same significance. Casale discusses this same crown in conjunction with Hajji Ahmed’s map. In the fifth volume of his work, entitled *Suleymannama*, Arif describes the Ottoman Sultan Suleyman as being extraordinary. No other person has combined royal glory and religious leadership like he has. He is the last reformer of the true religion, the last mythic king of Arif’s new Ottoman *Shahnama*. As Adam had marked the first era of human history, so Suleyman marks the last. Suleyman and his times are the culmination of human history. Eryilmaz demonstrates how these themes are present in the miniature illustrations used.

The last essay, by Hakan T. Karateke, departs somewhat from the others in that it does not treat history writing in the fifteenth and

sixteenth centuries, but rather in the late nineteenth century. Karateke explains how a tripartite system of periodization, drawn from European sources, was adopted by Ottoman historians of the later nineteenth century, which they termed a “new method” (*usul-i jadid*). This was a manifestation of a changing worldview amongst Ottoman scholars—a new universalism where the Ottoman Empire was not the last, greatest achievement of mankind, but was just one of many great states in history. Karateke’s article describes how the older methods of ordering historical time and events by dynasty and chronology were gradually and not altogether smoothly replaced by the European mode of periodization: ancient, medieval, and modern. According to the author, this tripartite division adopted in the later nineteenth century has remained the only scheme used in modern Turkish historiography, and has had a great impact on Turkish historical consciousness even throughout the twentieth century.

For its fine scholarship, multiplicity of approaches, and wide range of subjects covered, this book will find much use by scholars of Ottoman historiography. Further, there are many themes and topics which run through the book’s separate parts, and these help to give it cohesion and unity. In reading, it feels more like a monograph than just a collection of essays. It will prove a fine addition to any research library.

DAVID GIOVACCHINI

UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

The One Man Village. A film by Simon El Habre. Place: Platform Studios, 2008.

The One Man Village, Simon El Habre’s first film, explores his own family history. Released in 2008, it was immediately acclaimed by critics, and screened at many prestigious film festivals around the world. Among the many awards it received, we may list: Best International Feature Documentary at the Hot Docs Festival (Canada, 2009); Special Mention of the Jury at the Film Festival Della

Lessinia (Italy, 2009); and the Best Documentary award at the AMAL Euro-Arab Film Festival (Spain, 2009).

Between 1975 and 1990, Ayn al-Halazun, a small southern Lebanese village, was deserted and partially destroyed. *The One Man Village* shows the daily life of Samaan el-Habre, the director's uncle, the sole inhabitant of this ghost village. Samaan wakes up every day at dawn to take care of his animals, cultivate his lands, and look after his house. Throughout the day, the spectator sees him working, eating, smoking cigarettes, welcoming rare visitors, and talking about his childhood, and his dreams and hopes for the future.

The director chose to use very long and slow camera shots, giving the spectator a sense of the *One Man*'s quiet life. The tempo of the film is that of his life, rhythmmed by sunrise, sunset, and seasons. The film opens on a very early morning in winter time, and ends on a late afternoon sometime after Easter, depicting the full range of Samaan's activities around the year. The minimalist soundtrack is in perfect accordance with the images: crows, peeps, moos, Samaan's voice, and rarely some light Arabic music.

Although Samaan is a joyful character who likes to joke and laugh about almost everything, he sometimes appears overwhelmed by emotions, remembering his family, childhood, and events that occurred during the civil war. In these moments, the spectator can feel the deep sadness surrounding his existence.

A few others characters make an appearance, visitors for the day coming from all over Lebanon. In front of the camera, they recollect their lives in Ayn al-Halazun, evoke childhood memories, and express their unfailing attachment to this village that they always leave before sunset.

If the film is depressing, it nevertheless gives a unique insight into the tragic effects of a civil war on civilians through Samaan's family history, and Ayn al-Halazun's inhabitants' stories. The film can be used pedagogically, and any academic or research library serving a Middle Eastern department should own a copy of it.

ANAÏS SALAMON

MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Modernity, Sexuality, and Ideology in Iran: The Life and Legacy of a Popular Female Artist. By Kamran Talattof. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011. Pp. xii, 318, with notes, bibliography, index. ISBN: 9780815632245 (hardcover).

Kamran Talattof, a professor of Persian and Iranian studies at the University of Arizona, is the author, co-author, and co-editor of numerous books, essays, and articles. Among his publications are *The Politics of Writing in Iran: A History of Modern Persian Literature*, and *Modern Persian: Spoken and Written*, with D. Stilo and J. Clinton. He co-edited *Essays on Nima Yushij: Animating Modernism in Persian Poetry* with A. Karimi-Hakkak; *The Poetry of Nizami Ganjavi: Knowledge, Love, and Rhetoric* with J. Clinton; and *Contemporary Debates in Islam: An Anthology of Modernist and Fundamentalist Thought* with M. Moaddel. He also co-translated *Women without Men* by Shahrnoosh Parsipur, with J. Sharlet, and *Touba: The Meaning of the Night* by Parsipur, with H. Houshmand.

In this book, Talattof is making a connection between ideology, modernity, and sexuality and the space of women in Iran and their social roles before and after the 1979 revolution. He defines the “popular” arts as the production of commercial movies, dances, or pop music that most people consume. On the other hand, he categorizes the “high” arts as those which are expensive to produce, such as noncommercial movies, poetry, and literary works for elite culture. He emphasizes that in order for the idea of modernity to be successful in an ancient nation such as Iran, it should permeate both the “high” and “popular” arts and culture.

Talattof believes that modernity, gender, and identity issues were never unfolded in pre-revolutionary Iran because of the cultural history of the country. With the 1979 revolution and the new ruling conditions hindering modernity and with the dramatic changes in the social and political life of the country, these issues became even harder to discuss. Talattof focuses on Kobra Saidi, also known as Shahrzad, and her life story as a dancer, actress, filmmaker, and poet. He exemplifies her as a female artist in Iran to reveal how the radical shifts in the country’s culture and the clashes between modernity and traditionalism led to an unreasonable conflict within Iran’s different societies. In doing so, he describes the genre of FilmFarsi movies, largely produced in late ’60s and early ’70s during the Pahlavi era. He offers some examples of FilmFarsi productions, which used

comedic/tragic themes to target the morals and traditions of Iran's society. He also points out how the film industry was trying to entertain a segment of society by creating irrelevant scenes of music with bold cabaret dancing and featuring nudity and immoral relations. These caused some socially repulsive actions and sparked criticism of the regime's cultural corruption during this era.

Talattof discusses the reasons why Shahrzad and other female artists had difficulties not only in pre-revolutionary Iran, in their quest to be respected as artists, but were also doomed to be silent or even imprisoned after the 1979 revolution. Unlike dance in a Euro-American context, where it is considered entertainment and art, in Iran it has lacked a disciplinary methodology. Dance has always been regarded with ambivalence and appreciated negatively many in Iran. Publicly-viewed dancing in Iran is considered a "sin" by religious authorities and a "popular art" by leftist intellectuals. Despite the history of women dancing in ceremonies, Shahrzad could not gain approval as a dancer, since the religious discourse over the centuries has considered this profession a shameful one. In the literary field, Shahrzad used unusual metaphors with a tendency toward surrealism, which made her works appear absurd to the cultural discourse and prevented her from being accepted in literary-intellectual circles. It is not until chapter five of the book when some poems and autobiographical works written by Shahrzad are presented to help the reader associate them with Talattof's description. In documenting Shahrzad's life, he has related a few of the numerous stories she told of being abused, left in poverty, and disassociated from the real world after the revolution. Talattof suggests that after the 1979 revolution, the private and public lives of individuals, as well as politics and religion, became one. This meant that the lives of individuals such as Shahrzad carried much less importance than ideological groups, family, and community. The majority of Iran's population treated these individuals based on the rules enforced by religious authorities, who in turn made their judgments based on records from the previous regime.

Talattof points out that despite the movements led by women activists, the number of sexual crimes and honor killings or suicides is still rising in Iran. Even though the "younger" generation in Iran is currently more aware of issues related to modernity, gender, and sexuality, there are limited changes in general and public views about the notion of sexuality, gender, and modernity. Any activity or

movement targeting issues of identity is being attacked through sexuality and being labeled as corruption or promotion of prostitution.

In societies where modernity has been successfully achieved, debates on sex and body-related issues tend towards a discussion of self-control and self-discipline. On the contrary, in societies where the concept of modernity has been absent or blocked, these issues are the subjects of ideological and erratic control causing mostly harm to females. Thus, the author concludes, a society would be a healthy one only if the connection between history, legal systems, and cultural approaches to the body are intact and updated regularly.

This book is good reading for individuals who like to explore life stories of female artists, and their role in “popular” arts and the challenges they have gone through before and after Iran’s 1979 revolution. The author convincingly uses Shahrzad, her life, and her works to document the cultural conception of “popular” arts in Iran. This book also contains well-organized citations which are easy to follow by the reader.

SHAHNZAD KHOSROWPOUR
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY–PUEBLO

**Books Received for Review
in *MELA Notes*
December 2014¹**

- Abisaab, Rula Jurdi, and Malek Abisaab. *The Shi'ites of Lebanon: modernism, communism and Hizbullah's Islamists*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014.
- Haeri, Shahla. *Law of desire: temporary marriage in Shi'i Iran*, revised edition. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014.
- Hinnebusch, Raymond, and Tina Zintl, eds. *Syria from reform to revolt*, volume 1, *Political economy and international relations*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014.
- Koni, Ibrahim. *A sleepless eye: aphorisms from the Sahara*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013.
- Şeyyad Hamza. *The story of Joseph: a fourteenth-century Turkish morality play*, translated by Bill Hickman. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014.
- Tahir, Madiha R., Qalandar Bux Memon, and Vijay Prashad, eds. *Dispatches from Pakistan*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014.
- Yaghoubian, David N. *Ethnicity, identity and the development of nationalism in Iran*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2014.

¹ This list includes books not previously listed which have been received to date and are awaiting review.

JOAN BIELLA RECEIVES PARTINGTON AWARD FOR 2013

NEW ORLEANS, LA— 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 Ph.D. 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.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

András Riedlmayer
Partington Award Committee Chair 2013
riedlmay@fas.harvard.edu
<http://www.mela.us>

GEORGE N. ATIYEH PRIZE WINNERS 2013

The George N. Atiyeh Prize committee received three outstanding applications this year, and decided to award the three applicants:

- Ms. Anna Robinson
- Mr. Blake Robinson
- Ms. Gayle Fischer.

Anna begins her final year of library school at the University of Texas (UT). After high school, she lived nine months in Israel, where she studied Hebrew, and upon return enrolled for degrees in English and Near Eastern Studies at the University of Washington. She also studied Arabic in Cairo (AUC) and travelled in Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria. This summer she attended a course on Islamic codicology, sponsored by the Islamic Manuscript Association and Stanford University. She has some experience in libraries, in public services at the undergraduate library in the University of Washington, and currently as the Serials Graduate Research Assistant at a science library.

Blake discovered his passion for Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies when studying Spanish civilization at the University of Texas at Austin. After graduating, he moved to Sidney, where he enrolled in a Masters degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies, and decided to pursue a career in librarianship. Back in the U.S., he graduated with his M.L.I.S. from Florida State University in 2011, and began a Ph.D. in Information Studies in 2012. In his role as Graduate Research Assistant in the Scholars Commons at Strozier Library, he participated in area studies collection development (particularly Middle Eastern Studies), reference work, and library instruction.

Gayle graduated in 2012 with a B.A. in Arabic and Philosophy, as well as a certificate in Middle Eastern Studies. Her Arabic studies led to her first library job at the Portland State University Library, where, initially hired to check in Arabic periodicals, she was then

promoted to cataloguer for Middle Eastern language materials (Arabic, Turkish, and Persian) in all formats. After graduation, she enrolled in an M.A. program in Middle Eastern Studies and a program leading to an M.S.I.S. in Information Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. She is currently working as a Graduate Student Assistant at the Perry-Castañeda Library, where she is primarily responsible for copy-cataloguing Arabic monographs and checking in Arabic serials.

Congratulations to all recipients.

The George N. Atiyeh Prize Committee.
Anaïs Salamon (Chair), McGill University
Sean Swanick, McGill University
David Hirsch, UCLA

George Atiyeh Award Essay

ANNA ROBINSON

The George Atiyeh Award has been the greatest support in my career pursuits. I aspired toward the profession prior to attending the 2013 Middle East Librarians Association (MELA) meeting in New Orleans—I had met individual librarians at their institutions and specialized workshops, and closely followed the discussions on MELANET. Among my cohort in the University of Texas at Austin’s School of Information, however, the specificity of my educational needs were considered unusual. The viability of a career in subject specialization seemed dubious in the contemporary job market.

Attending the MELA meeting affirmed my goals and demonstrated a wider perspective of the practice of Middle East librarianship. The presentations provided necessary context to connect the concepts of my coursework to the contemporary obstacles and needs of the field. I came to understand the diversity of the profession as well as the common objectives driving us forward. Multiple presentations on programming and outreach indicated a possible shift in the responsibilities of specialists for broadening our community engagement. Even so, close scrutiny of manuscript cataloging and description reinforced the value of our traditional skills. Discussions among the Middle East Materials Project also reflected the transitions and negotiations of changing roles and practices. Most encouraging to me, I was accepted wholeheartedly as a colleague and found inspiration in professional comradery.

Additionally, I cherished the opportunity to reconnect and make new acquaintances with scholars at the Middle East Studies Association conference. Several discussions were directly pertinent to the research I endeavor to support, and I had the opportunity to represent the lasting contributions of engaging undergraduate scholars in emerging research methods from my previous work with the University of Washington’s Ottoman Text Archive Project.

The encouragement and assistance I have received from the community of Middle East librarians is unmeasurable. I wish to extend special thanks to Mary St. Germain and Robin Dougherty, who met with me prior to my graduate studies and shared their professional experience, as well as Laila Hussein Moustafa and Sean Swanick, whom I met at the Islamic Codicology course, and who encouraged me to apply for the George Atiyeh Award. I appreciate Gayle Fischer's moral support through the drive between Austin and New Orleans. I am also grateful to Janet Heineck, who graciously offered assurance and insight during my job search. I am particularly indebted to Jaleh Fazelian, whose legacy at Washington University I have the privilege to build upon as the new Islamic Studies and South Asian Studies Librarian. It brings me great honor to be among such dedicated and accomplished professionals as the members of the Middle East Librarians Association.

George Atiyeh Award Essay

BLAKE ROBINSON

I am a librarian with the State Library of Florida and a Ph.D. student in Information Studies at Florida State University. My research interests include social media, government information, information organization, and social change in the Islamic world. I earned my bachelor's degree from the University of Texas at Austin, where I studied business and Spanish. My study of Spanish history in Austin led me to write a master's thesis about Islamic Spain, which I completed as part of my degree in Arabic and Islamic Studies from the University of Sydney. After I graduate, I hope to work as a librarian specializing in Middle East or international studies.

The George Atiyeh Award made it possible for me to attend both MESA and MELA. I would like to thank both organizations for their generosity, and I greatly enjoyed my time as I explored everything both conferences had to offer. I enjoyed meeting established librarians and researchers, and I received valuable advice that will aid my professional development as I go forward. While I greatly enjoyed all of my time in New Orleans, several events in particular stand out.

At MELA, I greatly enjoyed Jaleh Fazelian's presentation "The Arab Spring and Embedded Librarianship." One of the challenging things about teaching students about social change is the constantly changing nature of events on the ground. Jaleh's blend of older technologies (such as course guides) with newer technologies like R-SHIEF serves as a good model for librarians looking to try something new with embedded librarianship.

I also learned a lot from Vani Natarajan and Che Gossett's report on the Librarians and Archivists to Palestine trip. Growing up in the United States, it is easy to take well-funded, well-stocked libraries for granted. Similarly, archives with proper climate control and usable finding aids are often a given as well. Hearing the presenters speak hammered home how dire the situation for libraries and

archives is in much of the Islamic world, particularly in light of recent events.

At MESA, several graduate students hosted a panel entitled “Contentious Spaces: Media and the Arab Uprisings.” Each student took an aspect of the Arab uprisings and linked it to something unexpected. I particularly enjoyed Rayya El Zein’s discussion of the Beirut hip-hop scene. Her exploration of the link between hip-hop and revolutionary sentiment added a novel element to the discussion of the Arab uprisings that I had not thought of before.

Finally, editors from several major journals in Middle East studies participated in a panel about best practices for submitting peer-reviewed manuscripts for publication. I was particularly struck by how different their house styles and standards were. For example, an excellent manuscript for *the International Journal of Middle East Studies* may be totally unsuitable for the *Middle East Journal*, which has a stronger political science/foreign policy orientation.

I greatly enjoyed my time at both conferences. It was fascinating to network with everyone from librarians and professors on the one hand to well-respected university press agents and database vendors on the other. As a student in a social sciences discipline, it was valuable for me to see firsthand how different the graduate student experience is for humanities students. I had never before seen recent graduates try to shop their book drafts to university presses, nor had I seen panels where students read from papers aloud rather than rely more heavily on visual aids such as PowerPoint.

Once again, I am grateful to the members of MELA, the prize committee, and MES for providing me with this wonderful opportunity. The chance to travel to a conference like this humanizes what can sometimes be a rather daunting experience for the newcomer. I feel fortunate that the George Atiyeh award is in place to open the doors for new entrants to the field of Middle East studies librarianship.

George Atiyeh Award Essay

GAYLE FISCHER

In October 2013, I was beginning my second of three years as a dual degree student at the University of Texas at Austin, pursuing an MSIS and an MA in Middle Eastern Studies. As a result of receiving the George Atiyeh Award, I was able to attend the MELA and MESA annual conferences for the first time, both of which have influenced my studies in the latter half of my graduate program.

The overarching theme of the presentations at MELA was outreach, including presentations about embedded librarianship, public programming, student perceptions of academic integrity, and an account of the Librarians and Archivists to Palestine visit. Listening to these presentations about outreach was a very valuable experience for my professional development because my work experience in Middle Eastern librarianship has primarily consisted of cataloging. In particular, these presentations exposed me to nontraditional methods and materials for outreach and gave me a better idea of the tasks and time management concerns involved in being a liaison librarian.

The MESA conference was also extremely helpful to me in terms of hearing about the wide range of research currently being conducted by graduate students and faculty in Middle Eastern Studies. Although I attended panels on a variety of topics, such as media studies, modern Syrian history, and Islamic studies, the panels which strongly influenced my research, including my master's report topic, were about digital humanities practices in Middle Eastern Studies. These presentations focused mostly on projects using geographic information systems and text encoding. Many of the speakers lamented the lack of resources available to digital humanists working with non-Roman alphabets, the problems of professional identity within their individual departments, and the difficulty and necessity of learning programming languages, such as Python. Based on these panels, I have since focused my coursework and research on digital humanities and scholarship, learning about

different toolkits and methodologies in a Middle Eastern Studies context.

My experiences at MELA and MESA opened my eyes to the variety of approaches to Middle Eastern Studies librarianship and research methods. I left feeling inspired by the potential for innovative outreach projects, such as embedded librarianship. Additionally, the various digital humanities panels at MESA prompted me to pursue research in this field and to consider the role of a Middle Eastern Studies subject specialist in providing instruction in newer, computational research methods.

Annual Meeting 2013 New Orleans LA

MELA Business Meeting October 9, 2013 Loyola University

MELA MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: RIFAT BALI, JOYCE BELL, JOAN BIELLA, ALI BOUTAQMANTI, ANDREW BUCHWACH, GUY BURAK, AMANDA CLICK, IMAN DAGHER, ROBERTA DOUGHERTY, JOHN EILTS, HIKMAT FARAJ, GEORGE FAWZI, JALEH FAZELIAN, CHRISTOF GALLI, DAVID GIOVACCHINI, DAVID HIRSCH, MICHAEL HOPPER, MOZHGAN JALALZADEH, AKRAM Khabibullaev, SHAYEE KHANAKA, EVYN KROPF, CONNIE LAMB, PETER MAGIERSKI, YAHYA MELHEM, LAILA MOUSTAFA, MEHDI RAHIMZADEH, ANNA ROBINSON, BLAKE ROBINSON, REBECCA ROUTH, ANAÏS SALAMON, RACHEL SIMON, SHARON SMITH, SEAN SWANICK, MICHAEL TOLER, PATRICK VISEL, JAMES WEINBERGER

President Christof Galli called the meeting to order and began the roll call. He thanked this year's sponsors and participants in the vendor showcase, which included Cambridge Archive Editions, Dar Mahjar, EbscoHost, Ferdosi Books, Gerlach Books and Online, IranFarhang, Laila Books, and al-Manhal. He also thanked Loyola University New Orleans and its Dean of Libraries, Dr. Michael P. Olson, for hosting this year's conference.

The minutes for the 2012 meeting were approved

OFFICER REPORTS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

Christof reported that the Executive Board looked at recent issues surrounding committees. Committees will remain as stated for the forthcoming year. However, each committee has to review the bylaws for terms and length of service, etc. By the time of the next annual meeting, we will stop all activities of non-standing

committees and re-constitute all members. More information will be forthcoming.

VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

Sean Swanick gave thanks to the executive board for their help in assembling this year's program and meeting. He also thanked Michael Olson for his responsiveness and help to make this year's meeting possible.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT:

[The Secretary-Treasurer's report and treasury statement appear as an appendix to these minutes.] (Secretary-Treasurer William Kopycki was unable to attend this year's meeting; David Hirsch read the report on his behalf.) The most significant achievement of the past year has been the restoration of MELA's tax-exempt status with the IRS. This was after a very long year of preparing and sending supporting documentation, answering requests for clarification, and finally incorporating necessary language into the By-Laws, the latter having been done by e-voting in January 2013. He thanked the executive board and membership for doing the necessary to make this happen.

An unexpected source of revenue this year was a royalty check from JSTOR for allowing them to make the *MELA Notes* backfile available on their website. MELA's corporate sponsors continue to be generous, and the vendor showcase event is proving to be very popular for all.

MELA's meeting expenses continue to be low, especially since we have been partnering with local institutions over the past two years. Because of this, registration fees have been kept to a minimum (\$50 over the past two years).

William has compiled a Secretary-Treasurer's manual. It is important as it indicates the different data stores comprising the MELA membership directories, ledgers, bank information, and other vital information that the Secretary-Treasurer, along with the rest of the Executive Board, should know about.

Finally, he proposed to the Executive Board and membership in general that MELA should consider funding activities that would contribute to MELA's mission. This may be in the form of filming the workshops held during the meeting and making these available

online (as was suggested this year), or perhaps re-entering the publishing field by revisiting the Occasional Papers series.

MELA NOTES EDITOR'S REPORT:

[The full text of the report is appended to these minutes.] (Editor Marlis Saleh was unable to attend; Michael Hopper read the report on her behalf). During the year 2013–14, one annual issue of *MELA Notes*, number 86 (2013), will be published in print and will be distributed to the membership and subscribers. The issue will appear electronically at <http://www.mela.us/MELANotes/MELA-Notes.html>.

Last year, MELA completed the process of supplying our entire backfile of *MELA Notes* to JSTOR for digitization and inclusion in their database. MELA Notes is now available as part of the Arts & Sciences IX Collection. Revenue sharing from JSTOR brought in \$3,192.42.

In March 2013, Marlis began the process of including *MELA Notes* in EBSCO Publishing databases. Beginning with issue 84 (2011) and going forward the journal will be available there. It is possible that in the future the backfile will also be added.

She urged the membership to submit articles and to encourage others to do so.

BOOK REVIEW EDITOR'S REPORT:

Rachel Simon reported that she received quite a few books this year, but still needs volunteers to review them. She reminded reviewers that they need to send reviews within six months' time of receiving a book. If publishers see that we are not reviewing the books they send, they will be reluctant to send new titles in the future. With *MELA Notes* now being sent to JSTOR, the potential audience to read these reviews will be wider. Book reviewing is an activity that new members in particular should take part in.

WEBMASTER'S REPORT:

Anaïs Salamon reported that she spent her first year as webmaster familiarizing herself with the MELA website. She has made some changes to improve the appearance of the site, but will work on this further as the current layout is only temporary. She updated site content, including posting the annual meeting information, the new issue of *MELA Notes*, and officers lists, and also created online membership and committee interest forms. She began migrating

pages for the Committee for Iraqi Libraries from the University of Chicago servers to MELA-hosted servers, but this remains a work in progress. She updated information and links to professional resources for librarians. Her goal now is to survey membership for feedback and suggestions as how to improve the website; she will do this by the end of the year. She asked members to report any updates or corrections to her directly.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Christof urged members who are interested in participating in committees to complete the forms found on the website.

COMMITTEE ON CATALOGING: Iman Dagher (chair) presented the report. The main focus of the ConC during this past year has been the ConC website; in order to increase awareness of our website, MELA librarians are encouraged to include links to it from their libguides or from the website of LIS programs. Additionally, two new subpages, one for Armenian cataloging and one for manuscript cataloging, have been added. The website is maintained by Mark Muehlhaeusler.

In the last year, many members of ConC have been busy with training and implementing RDA within their own institutions. The ConC tried to assist the cataloging community by adding the “Ask Joan [Biella]” service to the website. Thankfully, Joan Biella agreed to assist in that transition period, and volunteered to provide counsel on RDA cataloging during the initial phase of transition from AACR2. She has also volunteered to produce a guide on RDA cataloging for Arabic/Persian materials; the guide will include sample records for a variety of material types and problem situations, with references to the appropriate rule in RDA. The ConC’s assistance will be provided when needed. The guide will be appended to the online Arabic Cataloging Manual. The next goal is to open a dialogue and collect feedback from catalogers in different institutions on how the implementation is going, and the issues and problems noticed when cataloging Arabic/Persian materials.

The Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC) Policy Committee announced that after March 31, 2013, all authority records will be created according to RDA. Since then, the Arabic

Funnel has been busy reviewing RDA authority records for names submitted by different members. There are now a total of thirteen institutions participating in the funnel; some are more productive than others. Despite the new rules, statistics are showing good participation of the funnel members in applying RDA with authority work. Institutions interested in participating in the funnel should contact Iman Dagher or Joyce Bell. As for the MELA SACO Funnel, there were no submissions over the past year. Those wanting further information should contact Joyce Bell, the funnel's coordinator.

The ConC has organized a Middle Eastern and Islamic manuscripts cataloging workshop for this year. The results of this workshop should eventually lead to the preparation of a best practices document for manuscript cataloging.

The ConC was invited to participate in the OCLC Non-Roman Characters Interest Group, proposed by Cendrella Habre, director of the Lebanese American University Library. Its aim is to inform OCLC's product development unit about problems or barriers to the workability of OCLC records in languages that use non-Roman characters. In its initial phase, the interest group will focus on problems involving Arabic script in OCLC such as the lack of stop words, treatment of initial article "alif-lām," the confusion between "hā'" and "tā' marbūṭah," and the general look of the script. ConC agreed to appoint Rebecca Routh as its liaison to the group, which is still in the kickoff phase of its activity.

Regarding ConC membership, Mohamed Abou El Seoud and Nora Avetyan are rotating off by the end of November as they complete their three-year terms. Iman thanked them for their great contributions throughout this term. Joan Biella has retired from the Library of Congress and is no longer serving on the Committee, and has been replaced by Allen Maberry, Senior Cataloging Specialist at the Middle East Section, who kindly agreed to contribute through email. Behzad Allahyar is still serving the second year of his term. Mark continues to serve on ConC as the Webmaster, and Rebecca Routh is the ConC representative to the OCLC Non-Roman Characters Interest Group. The ConC have openings for two members, and nomination is open. If interested and willing to actively contribute, members can contact the ConC directly.

Rebecca Routh presented the ALA Committee on Cataloging Asian and African Materials (CC:AAM) report. The committee met as usual during the ALA Midwinter conference in January and again

at the annual meeting in June. During the past year the Committee has approved revisions to the Romanization tables of Arabic, Japanese and Jawi-Pegon (formerly referred to as Malay). Proposals for revisions to the Romanization of Pushto, Sindhi, Bulgarian, Serbian, and Macedonian have been reviewed but are still pending approval.

The new Romanization tables for Tamashek and Coptic are still under consideration. Deadline for comments on the Coptic proposal are October 18, so there is still time for knowledgeable persons to submit feedback.

Rebecca said that her term as MELA liaison to CC:AAM has now ended, and that Iman Dagher will take over.

David Hirsch reported that The Islamic Manuscript Association (TIMA) is working on a project entitled the International Treasury of Islamic Manuscripts, an online cataloging portal for Islamic manuscripts. The database is co-sponsored by the University of Leipzig, Oriental Institute. It is a free customizable online manuscript cataloging service in Arabic, English, German, and Indonesian. Individual institutions will be responsible for the cataloging, but hosting and support will be provided by the University of Leipzig. For further information, contact Stefanie Brinkmann of the University of Leipzig.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE: Committee Chair Ali Boutaqmanti presented the report. There were two main developments relating to the Middle East Librarianship course: Michele Cloonan is no longer the Dean of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons, and while the course was designed to accommodate Simmons students, enrollment was an issue. Simmons decided that there will not be enough students to justify the course. The committee was advised to redesign the course with the idea of making it available to students beyond Simmons. The new course proposal is done and a copy was submitted to the MELA Executive Board. The committee is in communication with Jennifer Andrews, Doctoral Studies Program Manager at Simmons, GSLIS, to give the go ahead and move forward with offering the course. If Simmons is not able to offer the course, the committee will have to look for another library school participating in the WISE program.

The MELA Mentorship Program has been fairly active. There are eight participants in the program and we are about to add two

more. The institutional affiliations of both mentees and mentors include the Islamic Studies Library at McGill, the Near East Division at the University of Michigan Library, Middle East and North Africa Resource Center at George Washington University, and the Islamic and Middle Eastern Collection Library at Stanford University Libraries. The majority of the mentees have asked for extending their mentoring experiences for another 6 months. New participants have been advised to schedule a meeting during the MELA Annual Meeting to further discuss their goals and objectives. The Mentorship Program Coordinator followed with an evaluation of the progress made by one participant member nearing the end of their 12-month term in order to assess their experience and provide feedback to further improve the program. The majority of the participants were very happy to have been enrolled in the MELA Mentorship Program and they are still reaping the benefits.

Ali offered his thanks to all the Education Committee members, mentors, and mentees for making this program a success.

(After a brief coffee break, the meeting resumed)

DAVID H. PARTINGTON AWARD COMMITTEE: David Hirsch announced this year's winner, Joan Biella. 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. 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. 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. 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. [A full press release outlining Dr. Biella's career has been issued separately].

In her acceptance speech, Joan reflected on her professional career, which started in 1978 working as a cataloger in an archaeological library in Jerusalem. In 1982 she attended her first MELA meeting, and shortly thereafter began work at Princeton, where she mentioned her career goal as being to "improve access to, and improve the quality of access to Middle Eastern library materials." She noted the changes she witnessed in cataloging, from AACR2, to the use of RLIN, and other systems, and her efforts to train others in how to use these. She offered her thanks to MELA for selecting her to receive the Partington award.

COMMITTEE FOR IRAQI LIBRARIES: Shayee Khanaka read the report on behalf of the committee chair, Jeff Spurr, who was unable to attend. Jeff reflected that the changes in MELA's bylaws regarding committees instantly superannuated just about everyone on this committee, rendering it effectively defunct in any event. He noted that the existence of the committee has provided a venue for communicating important information about the status of Iraqi libraries and archives for many years now, but it is clear that its function has become more limited as the situation of salient Iraqi institutions became ever more routinized despite worsening conditions throughout the country. He expressed his appreciation for all the help members have provided to the committee's essentially informational process over the years. He hoped that all reports that have received MELA sponsorship will be sustained permanently on the MELA website.

LESLEY WILKINS COMMITTEE: John Eilts gave a brief update on this. The fund is currently at \$15,000, but because of the poor rate of investment return opportunities, it has not been possible to issue the award as originally envisioned. John will travel to Boston in the next few weeks and while there he will meet with Peter Wilkins and other family members who have offered to help augment and provide

financial guidance. For its part, MELA will have to examine the mechanics and process of how the award should be given.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE: Shayee Khanaka (chair) announced Executive Board election results. She noted this year's number of voters was just slightly above half the total number of eligible voters. The results were as follows:

- Vice-President/Program Chair: Roberta (Robin) Dougherty
- Secretary-Treasurer: William Kopycki
- Editor: Marlis Saleh
- Listserv Manager: Evyn Kropf
- Member-at-Large: Michael Hopper
- Member-at-Large: Iman Dagher

NEW BUSINESS

Christof then opened the meeting for any new business. Robin Dougherty motioned (which was approved) to recognize William Kopycki for his work on this year's meeting, despite not being able to attend.

Robin gave an update on the OACIS project. Yale will transfer the OACIS database to American University of Beirut, who will serve as the new hosting institution. OACIS partners should contact Robin with any questions in the meantime until the transfer is complete.

John Eilts announced that a group consisting of Princeton, Stanford, and Yale are looking to create a virtual collection of Middle East movie posters. He invited others with holdings to participate—Michael Hopper of Harvard and David Giovacchini from Penn indicated that they have holdings in their collections. John said that the group was going to seek funding to create a global repository of these colorful items.

MEMP: Shayee Khanaka presented the report, noting that this would be her last report as chair. Fourteen new microfilming and digitization projects were approved this past year, including the following titles: *Agos*, *al-Dawah*, *Habazbuz* (digitization), *Haftah*, *Iraq* (digitization), *Adab-i Hirat* (already approved by MEMP Exec for microfilming and digitization), *Difa Afghanistan*, *Haqiqat Afghanistan*, *Hirat* (already approved by MEMP Exec for

microfilming and digitization), *Huquq va Zindag*, *Majallah-i Baladiyah* (already approved by MEMP Exec for microfilming and digitization), *Musharakat-i Milli*, *Shahadat Afghanistan*, and *Tahrir*. In addition, MEMP will support ongoing funding for *Kayhan* (London), since it is an ongoing publication. The board also approved filming of the Syrian newspaper *al-Nur*, and filming/digitizing *Ahrar* and *Afkar* newspapers published by the Arab émigré community in Brazil.

MEMP held its elections, selecting Michael Hopper as MEMP Chair for the coming year, with Jaleh Fazelian selected to serve as MEMP Secretary. Shayee thanked Judy Alspach of CRL for all her support and help over the past year.

Akram Khabibullaev announced that there would be an institute on Area Studies librarianship held at Indiana University at the end of October.

Robin asked members to submit suggestions for next year's program. Please contact her directly with any ideas or comments.

With no other business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

William Kopycki
Secretary-Treasurer

Secretary-Treasurer's Report

I am pleased to report that the most significant achievement of the past year has been the restoration of MELA's tax-exempt status with the IRS. This was after a very long year of preparing and sending supporting documentation, answering requests for clarification, and finally incorporating necessary language into the By-Laws, the latter having been done by e-voting in January 2013. I would like to thank the Executive Board for their help and support in resolving this issue. Our tax-exempt status was declared restored by the IRS in March 2013, retroactive from the time we submitted our first set of documents and forms in April 2012. In September I was able to file the E-990 form for tax year 2011 using Aplos website, and I will do the same for tax year 2012 by December 2013. What remains now is to file corporate taxes for the time of our "suspended" status, which I will work on when I resume my work duties in Cairo as all my print files needed for this activity are still there.

Looking at the Treasurer's report, we continue to have funds. One very significant contribution to our income was an unexpected royalty check from JSTOR for allowing them to make the *MELA Notes* backfile available on their website. Our corporate sponsors continue to be generous and quick to respond when I send out the mailings with sponsorship opportunities. And the vendor showcase event is proving to be very popular for all.

Our meeting expenses continue to be low, especially since we have been partnering with local institutions over the past two years. Because of this, we have been able to keep our registration costs down (\$50 over the past two years).

The other task I have been working on over the past year is the creation of a Secretary-Treasurer's manual. This is a document that complements the Business Guidelines I created last year, but indicates the different data stores comprising the MELA membership directories, ledgers, bank information, and other vital knowledge that the Secretary-Treasurer, along with the rest of the Executive Board, should know about. It also gives a general workflow and procedures for doing some of the routine activities that the Secretary-Treasurer should do over the course of the year. I had expected to have completed this by the time of the meeting, but present circumstances did not allow.

Finally, I would like to propose to the Executive Board and membership in general that we should consider funding activities that would contribute to MELA's mission. This may be in the form of filming the workshops held during the meeting and making these available online (as was suggested this year), or perhaps re-entering the publishing field by revisiting the Occasional Papers. All of these require funding, and now that we have well-established base funds, I think it is our responsibility to use them for the benefit of our community and profession.

I will be happy to answer any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

William J. Kopycki
Secretary-Treasurer

**Treasurer's Report for Fiscal Year 2013
(November 1, 2012–September 30, 2013)**

INCOME

Dues, subscriptions	\$3,077.50
JSTOR royalties from <i>MELA Notes</i>	3,129.42
2012 (remainder) and 2013 meeting registration	2,185.21
2012 MELA dinner (Matam Fez)	1,190.00
2013 MELA dinner (Byblos)	305.07
2012 and 2013 meeting sponsorships	1,193.30
Partington Award contribution (Dar Mahjar)	500.00
Ad for <i>MELA Notes</i> #85 and #86	581.30
Vendor showcase	1,746.90
Mailing list rental (1 list)	96.50
Bank interest	1.30
TOTAL INCOME	\$14,006.50

EXPENSES

MELA 2012 meeting expenses	\$2,913.93
MELA 2013 meeting expenses	300.00
2012 Atiyeh Awards (including MESA registration)	1,190.00
2012 Partington Award	100.00
MELA dinner 2012 (Matam Fez)	1,073.24
MELA social @ Sheraton	107.83
Refunds from 2012 meeting	50.00
<i>MELA Notes</i> #85 printing and mailing	1,146.50
Postage fees	79.45
Memorial donation for Jim Pollock	114.90
Web hosting renewal for www.mela.us	191.76
Bank fees	21.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$7,288.61

PNC Bank checking account balance as of September 30, 2013 \$44,294.30

PNC Bank savings account balance as of September 30, 2013 5,440.67

PayPal account balance as of September 30, 2013 4,674.27

TOTAL **\$54,409.24**

Wilkins Fund to date (included in total) \$15,552.02

As of September 30, 2013, MELA has 87 members paid up through 2013. Thirteen new members were added to the database since November 10, 2012.

As of September 30, 2013, there are 10 library subscriptions to MELA Notes, with 7 subscriptions being handled through subscription agents.

Respectfully submitted,

William J. Kopycki
Secretary-Treasurer

Editor's Report, October 2013

During the year 2012–13, one annual issue of *MELA Notes*, number 86 (2013), will be published in print and will be distributed to the membership and subscribers. The issue will appear electronically at <http://www.mela.us/MELANotes/MELA-Notes.html>.

The current issue will consist of the following items:

- ❖ “Addenda to Secondary Sources in Ismā‘īlī Studies,” by Nawazali Jiwa, University of Alberta
- ❖ “A Guide to Arabic Manuscript Libraries in Morocco: Further Developments,” by Jocelyn Hendrickson, University of Alberta, and Sabahat Adil, University of Chicago
- ❖ 7 Book Reviews
- ❖ Books Received for Review 2012–13
- ❖ Award Announcements and Essays
- ❖ MELA Business Meeting 2012 Minutes and Reports

Last year, we completed the process of supplying our entire backfile of *MELA Notes* to JSTOR for digitization and inclusion in their database. *MELA Notes* is now available as part of the Arts & Sciences IX Collection. Revenue sharing from JSTOR brought in \$3,192.42

In March 2013, we began the process of including *MELA Notes* in EBSCO Publishing databases. Beginning with issue 84 (2011) and going forward our journal will be available there. It is possible that in the future the backfile will also be added.

I am extremely grateful for the assistance of my colleagues Jonathan Rodgers, immediate past editor of *MELA Notes*, our book review editor, Rachel Simon, our webmaster, Anaïs Salamon, and our secretary-treasurer, William Kopycki.

As always, I urge the membership to submit articles and to encourage colleagues to do so.

Respectfully submitted,
Marlis J. Saleh, Editor