



Middle East Librarians Association

Wednesday, 21 November 2014

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PARTINGTON AWARD FOR 2014 ANNOUNCED

WASHINGTON, D.C., (21 Nov., 2014) – The Middle East Librarians Association (MELA) announced Dr. Christopher Murphy as the recipient of its 2014 David H. Partington Award, given annually in recognition of professional excellence, contributions to MELA, and accomplishments in the field of Middle East librarianship and scholarship. The award, generously sponsored by Dar Mahjar Inc, was presented at the 43rd annual meeting of MELA, held at the **George Washington University** in Washington, D.C. on 21 November.

Dr. Christopher Murphy has had a long and illustrious career at the Library of Congress which he first joined in 1985. Until 2007, he served as Turkish Area Specialist in the Near East Section of the African and Middle Eastern Division (AMED). There he was responsible for developing the collection in all formats concerning Turkey and Central Asia. In January of 2007, he was selected in a competitive process as head of AMED's Near East Section. As section head, he is responsible for overseeing the development of the collection in Arabic, Turkish, Persian and other languages.

He also supervises a staff of seven and is responsible for maintaining the quality of reference assistance given to Congress, federal agencies, scholars and the general public. A senior colleague at the Library of Congress attests that “All of these tasks he has accomplished extremely well and with great diligence.” His work has also given him opportunities to travel to Turkey, Egypt, Russia, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Central Asia (including Uzbekistan and Xinxiang) and Sweden, where he acquired difficult to find materials for the Near East collections. He was and remains the AMED representative to the Middle East Librarians Association, and is a current member of the Board of Governors of the Institute of Turkish Studies (2010-2014). He was the past president of the Turkish Studies Association (1998-2000), President of the Middle East librarians Association 1992-1993, and MELA Vice President 1991-1992. He is, as the Library of Congress’ official representative to the Middle East Materials

Project (MEMP), an ex officio member of their executive committee, and he was co-chair of the Standing Committee on Libraries of the Central Eurasian Studies Society.

Christopher Murphy is a scholar of the Near East. He earned a B.A. in Arabic and Near Eastern Studies at the University of Washington at Seattle in 1972, and in 1974 he received an M.A. in Turkic Languages and Literature. In 1980, he completed his doctorate in Turkic Languages and Literature, and wrote his dissertation on the historical novels of Abdullah Qadiriy and their connection to earlier Uzbek narrative literature. He received both a Fulbright Fellowship to conduct dissertation research and a post-doctoral award from the Institute of Turkish Studies to conduct research on sixteenth century Ottoman poetry. When he completed his doctorate, Chris Murphy joined the University of Washington Library as a Library Specialist and Assistant Near East Bibliographer until 1985.

Originally Murphy's scholarly interests focused on Uzbek, Chagatay and Ottoman Turkish literature; but currently he has been working on the Islamic manuscripts of the Near East collection at the Library, as well as on early printed books, and is the Library's resident expert on both. Most recently he published an article entitled "New Books for New People" in *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East*; which is an examination of several Central Asian and Crimean Tatar children's books from the 1920's and 1930's. He also published "Abdulla Qadiriy and the Bolsheviks" presented at Columbia University's "Symposium on the Literature of the Newly Independent Central Asian States." Subsequently this paper was turned into an article which appeared in *Central Asian Muslims*, edited by Joann Gross. Murphy's translation of Ottoman documents on printed works and the printing press in *The Book in the Islamic World*, SUNY Press, 1995, was very important in that it contributed to a better understanding of the field. His article on "The Physical Examination of Early Ottoman Printed Books, What Can that Tell Us" in the *Journal of Turkish Studies*, Harvard, 2000 was an important addition to the literature on the subject. Murphy has also been instrumental in creating two Library of Congress websites, *Islamic Manuscripts from Mali* and *Examples of Arabic, Persian and Ottoman Turkish Calligraphy*.

It is in recognition of his achievements and steadfast commitment as a scholar and a leader in the field of librarianship that Dr. Christopher Murphy has been chosen to receive this David H. Partington Award.

Ali Houissa

D.H. Partington Award Committee Chair, 2014