

# Middle East Library Partnership Project

Project Report and Findings

<http://melib.web.unc.edu>

**Charles Kurzman** Principal Investigator

**Mohamed Hamed** Research Associate and MELA / AFLI Liason

**John D. Martin III** Research Assistant

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
MELA 2015, Denver, CO

# Project outline

**Goals:** to develop a better understanding of opportunities for and obstacles to international collaboration between libraries in Arab Countries and the United States

**Timeline:** July 2014 - June 2015

**Funding:** grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation's Scholarly Communications program

## **Research avenues:**

Survey of library professionals and educators in Arab countries

Panel discussions with leading library scholars and professionals

Investigation of online presence of libraries in Arab countries

# Survey

## 257 total responses from:

1. Librarians, archivists, other professionals (58%)
2. LIS educators (25%)
3. Library administrators and para-professionals

## Focus on:

Awareness of international collaboration projects:  
Training programs -- 57.9%

Need for international collaboration: 96.5%

Benefits to institutions and people: Consortial agreements -- 41.8%, sharing ideas -- 27.2%, professional development/training -- 21.4%

Obstacles to collaboration: Philosophical or cultural differences, and administrative, or bureaucratic barriers – about 75%

# Panel discussions



## **Delegates:**

Leaders from MELA, AFLI, SLA-AGC

## **Meetings:**

MELA 2014, November, Washington, D.C.

SLA-AGC 2015, March, Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.

## **Issues under discussion:**

Disaster management

Resource sharing

Cataloging standards

Availability of catalog data

Training programs

Partnerships with older libraries

Library leadership

# Library online presence

**Sample:** 831 libraries in 17 countries

32.5% had some web presence (accessible library or institutional site)

15.2% had an accessible online catalog

**Findings:**

Larger libraries more likely to have web presence

National and university libraries most likely to be online

Holdings in majority of libraries are unknowable without physical access

# Recommendations

# Collaboration of professional organizations

Strengthen ties between different groups

- Encourage sustained collaboration between MELA, AFLI, and SLA-AGC
- Work with national library associations
- Listserv and social media cross-pollination
- Invited panels at other associations' meetings

# Library leadership conferences

Encourage regional and  
international conversations

- Meetings of library directors
- Encourage natural collaborations
- Regular meetings of national librarians and leaders in library associations
- Help in addressing common needs

# Disaster management plans

Support libraries and librarians  
in conflict zones

- Research to study damage from recent and ongoing conflicts
- Professional training
- Establish protocols for mitigating damages to collections and infrastructure

# Interlibrary catalogs

Support ongoing work to improve interoperability

- Lend support to ongoing collaboration between AUC and OCLC
- Create opportunities to deploy online catalogs in libraries that lack them
- Integrate new catalogs with major interlibrary catalogs

# Interlibrary loan

Increase portability of regional  
knowledge

- Digital loan agreements to overcome obstacles in shipping and delivery
- Investigate legal frameworks around copyright to protect intellectual property and extend access

# Internships and exchange programs

Provide international and cross  
cultural training opportunities

- Embed professionals in Middle East collections at U.S. universities with library schools / iSchools
- Practical experience and theoretical training for interns
- Explore possible bilateral exchange opportunities
- Increase international personal and professional connections for practitioners

# Training workshops

Provide on-site training  
opportunities

- Create training modules for state-of-the-art procedures and practices
- In-person training modules archived online for broader access
- Funding should provide for low- and no-cost options for participants

# Reference network

Facilitate international reference  
queries

- Clearinghouse for information
- Build experience with collaboration
- Build network incrementally as demand and interest grows
- Eventually include translation of queries to facilitate interactions with international colleagues lacking the Arabic or English skills for direct communication

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# Thank you

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<http://melib.web.unc.edu>  
for project information  
and report.