

MELA Notes

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MIDDLE EAST LIBRARIANS ASSOCIATION

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TRIBUTE

Back in November in Ann Arbor I asked Jim Pollock to have dinner with me. I knew my predecessor only from his writing and from his pithy remarks that stuck like darts in my neophyte mind. Over nondescript fish, vaguely broccoli, hard rolls, and coffee -- are editorializing and teetotalling behavioral facets of a common syndrome? -- we chatted about MELA and MELA Notes. I suppose I was seeking tricks of the trade, but what I got was the truth that editing requires persistence and composure. Pollock had a sense of accomplishment over a job well executed, but certainly no pride. Enthusiasm and competence without illusions of grandeur characterize his helmsmanship and writing, especially the no-nonsense mirth that bubbles forth from a Calvinist hunch that human endeavor runs its course in a very large arena. From our conversation and from rereading his pensées that appear in numbers 2 - 15 of MELA Notes, I gather that Pollock wants MELA to do limited tasks well. Grandiose plans stir within him the suspicion that perspective is giving way to pride and fanciful thinking. While some of us have been prone to advocating intergalactic missions, Pollock kept MELA Notes in tight orbit. No danger of unscheduled descent and earthbound detritus with him at the controls!

The first 15 numbers, totaling 368 pages, of the Notes are the oeuvre of a steady hand, disciplined mind and selfless spirit. The contents sustain rereading and Pollock's own prose still prods. I suspected in Ann Arbor that his would be a tough act to follow and now months behind I feel a little bit like one of the corps de ballet called to replace a prematurely retired Nijinsky. The "best" of Pollock (so far at least -- there's more to come from the fields of Indiana?) includes cooperation as a "benevolent bazaar, with enthusiasm and fatigue competing for the tourist's attention" (6, Oct. 1975), hamzat al-wasl as a "coughless comma floating above the prow letter Alif" (7, Feb. 1976), and the "What now is your alpha-bet?" (8, May 1976) call to gamblers at the romanization table. I can't quite see bibliophilism "careening through the social body" (3, Oct. 1974), but the "ripple of ambivalent coughs" that break forth whenever cooperation -- at NYPL we know it as another RLG meeting -- trots out is a familiar sound. A true ring-master, Pollock saved an orotund chuckler for last. Now that he has left center ring to inspect the egress (15, Oct. 1978), we owe him a hearty bravo. We can fittingly honor him by rereading the corpus past, pondering matters present, and communicating via MELA Notes forthcoming.

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REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP by Edward Jajko

My first job as president was to express, to the Library of Congress, MELA's opinion about LC's proposal to present all non-roman script cataloging in romanization only. LC made its proposal public just before our last annual meeting. We had the opportunity to discuss the proposal thoroughly at the meeting, and to vote in favor of informing LC -- which had requested

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comments and suggestions -- that we opposed total romanization. The MELA Committee on Machine-Readable Arabic-script Data (COMRAD) was instructed to draw up a set of principles outlining MELA's position, and I was given the task of turning those principles into a letter to be sent to Mr. Joseph Howard, head of LC's Processing Department. COMRAD and comrades met in the map library of the University of Michigan the day after the MELA meeting, and debated for more than an hour. Chris Filstrup, acting chairman of COMRAD, drew up the list of principles which came out of the debate, and later sent it to me. It took some time to translate Chris' concise and pithy statements into the form in which I sent them to Mr. Howard. The resolution taken at the MELA meeting had stipulated that I send all MELA members a copy of my letter before sending it to Mr. Howard, so that the members could respond to me or COMRAD members with further suggestions, criticisms, etc. We ran into some difficulty here, since I was able to send the original to Marsha McClintock only just before Christmas; because of the holidays, Marsha was unable to send out all the copies earlier than the end of December. All worked out in the end, however. Marsha deserves our thanks for a superb job of getting mailings out on very short notice.

Joseph Howard agreed to meet with a MELA delegation on 11 January 1979, right in the middle of ALA Midwinter week. About thirteen of us met in his office in the Thomas Jefferson Building of the Library of Congress, along with the usual division chiefs and section heads, and a guest, Leonard Gold, head of the NYPL Jewish Division. The meeting lasted for two hours. At the end I felt that I had never attended a worse, a more depressing meeting. We presented MELA's case against total romanization, and some of us gave our individual arguments against it. LC's people spoke for it, presenting us with very blunt arguments about Congressional funding, LC's needs to automate its systems, the advantages of on-line romanized cataloguing, and so on. We were there as representatives of MELA, presenting MELA's expert opinion as voted by a majority of members present at the November 1978 annual meeting. The Library of Congress, however, quizzed us about what our individual libraries had decided to do, i.e., to romanize or not? I left that meeting convinced that LC had made its decision to romanize long before, and that everything was so much public show and window dressing. A little more than a month later, I returned to Mr. Howard's office -- indeed, to the very same chair -- for a special meeting of the Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies. All of us were there ready and able to argue against romanization of Hebrew-alphabet cataloguing. And all of us had our thunder stolen by Mr. Howard, who opened the meeting by announcing LC's decision not to romanize Arabic and Hebrew alphabet materials. The dire consequence of this decision was stressed to the Council members, as its possibility had been to the MELA delegation: that the non-LC, non-roman cataloguing records would not be printed in NUC. But, as David Partington said in his letter to Mr. Howard, considering that LC has made no effort to include that information in NUC in the past, that's not much of a threat.

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The most recent issue of the Library of Congress Information Bulletin carries a notice saying that LC will begin totally-romanized cataloguing, for several listed languages. Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, and Yiddish are specifically excluded.

I wouldn't say that MELA, its sister organizations, and all those who wrote LC opposing total romanization, won a victory. We are not engaged in battle, and the issues are ultimately not all that momentous. But we did score some significant points. For one thing, the growing importance of two young library associations, MELA and the Council of Archives and Research Libraries in Jewish Studies (CARL), has been underscored. Further, the Library of Congress was made to back off from a decision which would have been advantageous to LC, but was quite clearly objectionable to many outside LC. The one thing I cannot understand, and which makes me raise my eyes to the heavens in despair, is the inclusion of Ottoman Turkish in the list of languages to be totally romanized. Our arguments against total romanization of Arabic and Persian were based to a great extent on the difficulty of romanizing -- the possibilities of ambiguity, of misleading the reader rather than directing him to his goal -- and I think we would all agree that the difficulties are even greater in Ottoman. The news carries more and more stories about federal government mix-ups: of Social Security funds paid faithfully, month after month, to people who are not qualified or don't want them and who regularly return the monies, with letters of explanation; of revenue-sharing monies paid to communities which don't want them. Newspaper columnists and 60 Minutes have a field day with such stories. (Does anyone know what a "field day" is?) Perhaps it is our turn now to have our national library hand us such a present.

Still on the subject of our national library: You are all no doubt familiar now with the report made to us a few years ago, at one of our annual meetings, by George Atiyeh, who told us that the NUC does not file Arabic-language reports from outside LC, but sends them on to George's section for inclusion in the Near East catalogues. The lack of non-LC reporting in the printed NUC's is, of course, a major reason behind the Near East National Union List project now under way at LC. What will interest you -- and your directors as well -- is that for a number of years those cards have not been forwarded by the NUC office. After the March meeting mentioned above, I looked into the Hebrew and Yiddish catalogues of the Hebraic Division. Those catalogues will be published soon, and I wanted to see how Yale was represented. To my surprise, I could find no Yale cards. Dr. Weinstein assisted, and found a few. But the format and classification showed that they were reports more than a decade old. Dr. Weinstein and one of the other staff members reported to me that no Yale cards had been received in the section within memory. Yale sends reports in on a regular basis, and those reports for the last nine years have included several thousand titles, at least 5,000, of Hebrew and Yiddish, and more than 6,000 Arabic. Dr. Weinstein agreed to inquire about our missing reports. I have since corresponded with the head of the Hebraic Section,

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Dr. Lawrence Marwick, who has informed me that Dr. Weinstein located more than 20,000 cards which had not been forwarded to the section by the Catalog Publication Division, which is in charge of the NUC. Only a few hundred are Yale reports, and there are still more cards to be located and transferred. At Yale, we have made arrangements to continue reporting to the Catalog Publication Division as before; but all Arabic-alphabet reports are separated out, to be sent directly to George Atiyah, and all Hebraica reports are separated for direct mailing to Lawrence Marwick. In addition, we are making arrangements for reproduction of relevant portions of our shelf list, so that the Near East and Hebraica Sections might have some record of our holdings. The problem here is not, of course, that the NUC has failed to publish non-LC reports of NE and HE cataloging. We've all known about that, have accepted the NUC's as incomplete and unreliable, and work around them. The second set of the Arabic Script Union Catalogue, sponsored by MELA, is now in press, and is an outstanding example of being able to work quite nicely without the NUC. The problem here is that the Catalog Publication Division failed to forward all those tens of thousands of reports; that the results of your work have been, so to speak, sitting in a shoe-box in some closet; and that this situation has existed for some seven years. George Atiyah may be sending you a letter about this problem, since it does have an effect on NENUL. But if you don't hear from him, if you handle Hebraica, if you are wondering what has happened to all those reports you have sent in to LC's Catalogue Publication Division, I suggest that you get in touch with George and Dr. Marwick.

ASSOCIATION CHRONICLE:

Minutes of the Executive Board Meeting, November 7, 1978 - Campus Inn, Ann Arbor, Michigan

Present were Fawzi Khoury, President, Edward Jajko, Vice President-Program Chairman, James Pollock, Editor, and Janet Heineck, Secretary-Treasurer.

The brief Executive Board meeting was called to prepare an agenda for the next day's business meeting. Changes in the mode of U.S. library acquisition of Middle East publications required by the discontinuation of the Special Foreign Currencies program were discussed.

Edward Jajko described the makeup of the report he planned to give the following morning on the visit by a group of MELA members to the Library of Congress in July. At key points during the main report, topical reports on CONSER and on the Middle East National Union Catalog project were to be given.

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Fawzi Khoury voiced for the record his disapproval of the composition of the committee to visit LC, saying that the Ivy League institutions of the East Coast were overrepresented. He did, however, approve and commend Mr. Jajko's organizational work on the project.

Michael Albin's report on the demise of the PL-480 program was moved from the late afternoon to the morning to follow that of Mr. Jajko, the two of which would then make up one long "LC report" to begin at 9 a.m.

The business meeting would consist of officers' reports, election of new officers, possible discussion of an increase in MELA dues, and discussion of the Library of Congress' plans to romanize their Arabic and Persian cataloging.

Minutes of Ed Jajko's Report on MELA's 6-7 July 1978 meeting with LC

[The tape from which I transcribed and edited these minutes upholds a venerable tradition of crumbling clay tablets and water damaged manuscripts. I have filled in lacunae where my memory speaks confidently. Lest I encourage scholastic glossing, I have omitted suspension points. Ed.]

When I was elected Vice President and Program Chairman I gave a great deal of thought to the kinds of programs I wanted to present. I had attended all the annual meetings of the Association since and including the one in Binghamton. Having heard all the programs and panels I developed a feeling that MELA needs to have more awareness of what is going on in Middle East librarianship at LC. At the 1977 meeting we had a report from an LC staff member, Jack Crawford, then assistant director of the overseas operation. This was a brief and general survey of the state of LC's Near East operation at the time. His report was useful. He had gone to a lot of trouble to gather the information at LC. But it was evident that despite his seriousness of purpose, care and good will, Mr. Crawford had not been entirely successful when in listing the backlogs at LC he mentioned that only a few hundred volumes were being held in the processing department and that cataloging was almost current. In fact, the true picture was almost 10,000 volumes backlogged in the Near East section.

I decided the best program for this year would be one which one way or other actively involved LC. I would like to sit here and say that I pulled a tremendous coup, but I didn't really. My first choice was to have LC people doing the work of the program by answering previously submitted questions and engaging in a dialogue with us. I wrote this to the Librarian of Congress in December 1977. William Welch, replying to the letter, made a counterproposal more or less identical to the plan I accepted. This was that MELA members go to LC.

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He expressed LC's eagerness to meet and cooperate with us. Frank McGowen, LC's head of overseas operations was designated LC's coordinator.

Once it was established that MELA members would go to LC, I began selecting the group. From the beginning I felt it necessary that the MELA group be small -- five to ten people. Since it would be the first meeting of its type, at least for the Near East, I decided larger and older libraries should be there. I also tried for some geographic balance. Not all invited accepted and there were some unexpected volunteers. The end result was Near East librarians largely from the Northeast: Brenda Bickett (Georgetown), Fawzi Khoury (Washington), Francine McNulty (Harvard), Eric Ormsby (Princeton) and myself. Participants either paid their own way or were assisted by their respective libraries. More geographic representation proved impossible. I asked for questions from the membership. Not as many came in as I would have hoped, yet we had more than enough material.

The agenda. I presented our questions. LC rearranged it so they could group people together. We had three sessions -- Thursday morning on general topics; Thursday afternoon on cataloging and automation; Friday morning on acquisitions.

In the first session we discussed the Near East National Union List (NENUL), LC budget, automation, increased cooperation between LC and MELA, LC's overseas operations, MELA's position vis-à-vis LC and the rest of the library world. Dr. Atiyeh reported on NENUL. He stressed that although it will be romanized, no decision had been made for LC cataloging. NENUL will follow MARC format and will be issued on tape. G. K. Hall has expressed interest in publishing it. The cut-off date may be as late as 1975. The project is six months old and is expected to last three years. The card files are not yet in a single alphabetical order. The principle of superimposition is followed. Some corporate bodies may be entered differently according to different cataloging codes. These will be connected by SEE ALSO references. Various editions also are connected by notes. Reports sent from NUC may vary much in format. Trying to reconstruct an original title page which is itself not accessible for checking can be difficult.

Problems. 1) Publications are reported by some libraries in Arabic script, by others in romanized form. NENUL would like to enlist form cooperation in romanizing these entries. 2) Some reports are inadequate, making identification impossible. NENUL would like to return such reports to libraries for review. 3) Some reports represent incomplete sets. NENUL would prefer not to mention incomplete holdings unless important for other reasons. 4) Are there institutions wishing to correct or update reports already sent to NUC; who cares to forward reports of previously unreported works? 5) NENUL needs in formation from reporting institutions as to: a) field covered by reports as forwarded to NUC and b) lists of catalogs published and covering holdings already reported to NUC. Finally NENUL welcomes questions and suggestions on these and other matters.

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The next thing we discussed in our morning session was budgets. LC's had been cut by 5% by Congress and it was assumed the Senate would concur. Computerization will be cut. A number of people complained about LC inconsistency. LC catalogers disagreed; no conclusion. Then we went to the operation of Albin's office in Cairo. LC explained why certain materials and accession lists are for limited distribution or for LC only. The Cairo office buys one copy and catalogs it, then acquires 25 more for distribution.

Questions were asked about LC area priorities. Response was, none in theory. LC does consult ARL when necessary about priorities. Some criticized LC for being too dependent on ARL. LC countered by stating that as an advisory group MELA should make its needs felt. Finzi mentioned there should be more area studies librarians in ALA. MELA responded that ALA is too large, difficult to work within, overorganized and that MELA is smaller and more effective.

Thursday afternoon -- cataloging, classification, computerization. Lucia Rather chaired. LC catalogs 250,000 titles per year. A title goes through 25-30 pairs of hands. This assembly line procedure may create a backlog at many points, even after a title has left the card section. Number of catalogers: 3 Arabic, 1/2 Turkish, 1/2 Armenian, 1 Greek, 2 Hebraic, 1 Persian. Lengthy discussion of cataloging priorities. Arabic, Yiddish, and Hebrew are generally in priorities 4 and 6, Turkish and Persian in 6 and 7. LC groups its materials by language, not content, so that particular items are not necessarily pushed through. Rather said that there had been discussion of changing to a content priority system. (Priority 3 is current foreign research material, legal works, rare books. 4a is non-current materials selected for research value; 4b is current serials not included in current priorities.)

The Near East Section has a 10,000 item backlog. These are accessible. If sent to cataloging, these titles would not be available to users.

Established names are put into a tape authority file even before cataloging is completed. The tapes are available for use. For establishing names, LC uses various sources, no preference given to any -- BM catalog, Brocklemann, Kahhalah, Encyclopedia of Islam 2d ed, Encyclopedia of Islam 1st ed.

LC has asked two Turkish learned institutions to comment on romanization tables.

Middle East law materials in LC's law library are not classified and there are no plans to develop a classification schedule. LC is open to cooperative projects and suggestions on how to classify.

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The second part of the cataloging session was devoted to automation. Surprisingly brief. LC had not made a final decision on the degree of romanization and other aspects of computerization. McNulty noted contribution of Harvard. Many opinions in opposition to full romanization. Crawford supported full romanization since it would allow LC to catalog more titles. Finzi supported vernacular scripts: we should reflect international character of catalog. Others at LC said totally romanized cataloging is cheaper and available now. [It should be noted that by the end of the discussion on romanization the prevailing LC stance had altered markedly. Many became chary of romanizing vernacular scripts off the face of the catalog map. The big issues were not fluff and apple pie dreams, but the stuff of purpose and credibility. Ed.]

CONSER at Harvard by Francine McNulty

On the afternoon of Friday, July 7, I met with Dorothy Glasby, CONSER Operations Coordinator in LC's Serial Record Division. This meeting gave me an opportunity to inquire about what special procedures, if any, LC has for inputting Middle Eastern language serial records to the CONSER data base, and what, at that point, had been the extent of their input. I also wanted to alert their CONSER staff to indexing errors in LC records, and to share some observations of a more general nature concerning both the Middle Eastern Department's participation and the project as a whole.

Before launching into the specifics of this meeting, I thought it would be helpful if I gave some background information on the CONSER project so as to provide some context for both the Middle Eastern Department's participation and the LC meeting itself. While CONSER is probably not yet of immediate or direct concern to anyone here today, the eventual by-products of the project will some day be of great interest to us all. Therefore, some insight into and understanding of what the project entails and particularly how it has evolved can assist us in making intelligent, informed decisions about such by-products in the future.

CONSER is an acronym that stands for Conversion of Serials. That is one of the few points on which there is unanimous agreement, for exactly what that conversion process seeks to achieve is not entirely clear. The documentation for the project has changed considerably, and the emphasis of the project has shifted somewhat in the past few years. Originally, CONSER was envisioned as a file building project of limited duration for serials bibliographic records that could be used by the generators and maintainers of union lists for serials. Anyone who has had any experience in serials cataloging or acquisitions can no doubt list numerous reasons why more rigorous bibliographic control of serials is necessary. By the early 1970's several institutions across the nation had already started work on independent

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serials data base projects in an effort to implement such control. Of utmost concern to the people behind the CONSER project was that independent and mutually incompatible projects fail to satisfy the need for a unified, comprehensive data base. Therefore, rather than allowing the situation to develop to the point where these institutions became too firmly entrenched in their local systems, it was deemed necessary to immediately begin coordinating bibliographic control of serials on a national level.

After the 1973 ALA Conference, an ad hoc discussion group on serial data bases met to identify problem areas in existing serials data bases, and the requirements of a national serials data base. The result of these discussions was that the guidelines for CONSER project were established. CONSER was formally announced at the 1974 ALA Midwinter meeting. While the Council on Library Resources was designated temporary manager of the project, two types of centers of responsibility were appointed to monitor the content of the records. As bibliographic centers, the Library of Congress and the National Library of Canada are responsible for the bibliographic portions of records, while the National Serials Data Program, based at LC, and ISDS/Canada authenticate the ISDS elements (i.e., ISSN, key title). Because LC was unable to assume administrative responsibility in November 1977, the date originally set for transferral of this function from CLR, OCLC accepted the role in March 1978.

THE CONSER RECORD

The CONSER record represents an expanded version of the MARC-Serials format, with modifications to accommodate some of the data elements of the CAN MARC (Canadian) format and of ISDS, and the punctuation and arrangement of elements prescribed by ISBD-S. In other words, the CONSER record attempts to reconcile five different standards (including LC's interpretation and application of AACR) which have unique and occasionally conflicting requirements. (As an example, the key title has assumed a prominent role in the bibliographic portion of a record, due to a recent decision to express linking titles in terms of key title, rather than bibliographic title. The implications for non-roman alphabet records are increased complexity and decreased intelligibility of records, for while most of a record is romanized according to the LC standard, the key title, because it is an ISDS element, will follow the ISO standard of romanization.)

PROCEDURES FOR FILE BUILDING

Speed and size seem to have been the two most important criteria in determining the original procedures for file building. To promote the goal of establishing a file of 200,000 - 300,000 records of current serial titles in just two to three years, three existing files were merged and tape loaded into OCLC in 1976. The largest of the three, the Minnesota Union List of Serials (MULS), containing 75,000 titles, was selected on the basis of both size and compatibility with the LC MARC-S format. LC and NLC, as centers

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of bibliographic responsibility, each contributed its existing serials files, numbering 26,000 and 3,000 titles, respectively.

Fifteen institutions, chosen on the basis of the quality of their serials cataloguing and their financial capability to support a CONSER staff and in-house facilities, are currently full CONSER participants. While any OCLC member institution can contribute a serials record to the CONSER data base, only CONSER participants have the capability of editing serials records on-line, or reporting errors and modifications for records which have been authenticated and "locked" by a center of responsibility.

Regardless of who inputs a record, however, it must satisfy the requirements of the Minimum Data Element Set, as prescribed in the CONSER Manual, to be considered a standard CONSER record. Quality control is further achieved through agreement among CONSER participants concerning their rights and limitations with respect to modifying each other's records, and by authentication by the various centers of responsibility.

CONSER AND THE MIDDLE EASTERN DEPARTMENT

The groundwork for the Middle Eastern Department's participation in the CONSER project was begun about five years ago, when the Department undertook an extensive serials recataloguing project. Early in 1977, the head of the Harvard University Library Office for Systems Planning and Research ascertained that funds could be obtained for converting these records. In the spirit of cooperation, particularly fostered by RLG, the Department agreed to participate in CONSER. In April 1978, the project, funded by a grant of \$15,000 from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, was officially launched. The grant enabled us to hire a full-time serials data editor, who works in conjunction with the Middle Eastern Department and the HUL Office for Systems Planning and Research, and is principally responsible for transliterating, tagging, and inputting records, in addition to gathering surrogates and reporting holdings.

Our original goal was to enter all 1,400 of our retrospective and current titles in Arabic, Turkish (both modern and Ottoman), Persian and Urdu to the data base. Numerous unforeseen problems which have manifested themselves in the course of our involvement in the project have forced us to significantly modify these goals, and to concentrate our efforts on just Arabic, modern Turkish, and possibly Urdu or Persian. Among the most pressing of these problems are the machine loaded records, discussed above, which require much time to upgrade, and indexing errors. Furthermore, certain requirements and standards of serial cataloguing have changed since the Middle Eastern Department began its recataloguing project some five years ago. Thus, records that incorporate such obsolete practices as dashed on indexes or truncated titles must be updated to reflect current standards before they can be entered to the CONSER data base.

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HOLDINGS

At the Harvard University Library, a machine-readable file to record the holdings of the more than ninety units that comprise the University Library was developed locally. This holdings file is linked to our CONSER records. The Middle Eastern Department has written an appendix to the holdings file manual which gives us the capability of recording our holdings in more than just one calendrical system. Such an accommodation is extremely useful when a non-Gregorian calendar, be it Hijrī shamsī, Hijrī qamarī, or the now defunct Iranian imperial, determine the publication schedule and hence volume designation of a periodical. This also partially circumvents current AACR ruling which stipulates that a Gregorian date in the holdings is preferred in the bibliographic record over a non-Gregorian date when a title bears both. (The non-Gregorian date is supplied in a note, if at all.)

PROBLEMS

One of the most serious difficulties encountered thus far is that of retrieval of records in the data base, due, primarily, to the inadequacy of the OCLC search strategy for Arabic language records. (Straightforward indexing errors are serious to the extent that they can be very difficult to identify, but once spotted can be easily corrected. Indexing problems caused by the search strategy, however, have far graver implications in terms of record retrieval.) In a report submitted to OCLC in June 1978, our Middle Eastern Serials Data Editor identified two major areas of difficulty in Arabic language records. First is the problem caused by the initial article "al". Fields 110 (corporate author as main entry) and 710 (corporate author as added entry) have no indicators to suppress non-filing elements. Thus, the search keys for al-Jāmi "ah al-Miṣrīyah lil-Dirāsāt al-Nafsiyah are ALJAM, ALM. Second, and far more serious, is the problem of medial articles, which are considered part of the word they qualify and as such become part of the search strategy. Therefore, to search for the title al-Kitāb al-sanawī--al-Jāmi "ah al-Miṣrīyah lil-Dirāsāt al-Nafsiyah, the keys ALK,AL,AL,A are used. These are the very same keys that would be used by most any other yearbook called "kitāb al-sanawī" in Arabic, and linked, following ISBD convention, to the issuing body. The aim of this convention, i.e., to render a title more specific and thus enhance its utility as a point of access, is defeated by the OCLC search strategy. Stoplists for common first words of titles, such as majallah, nashrah, and kitāb, might temporarily help to improve the effectiveness of a search, but fail to address the problem of the medial article, which becomes an increasingly larger obstacle to efficient retrieval with the growth of the file.

There are of course problems which affect all types of records, regardless of language. Two of the most troublesome, insofar as their potential effect on the integrity of the records and their suitability for union list activities are superimposition and the existence of both latest and successive entry cataloguing.

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LC MEETING

LC began using the MARC-S format in cataloguing Arabic serials in 1973. In November 1975 and June 1976, all Arabic language records in the LC MARC-S serials file were tape loaded into the OCLC data base. Since June 1976, LC has been doing all of its new serials cataloguing directly into CONSER.

The following statistics, taken from a sample survey done by LC early in 1978, reflect the extent of their input of Middle Eastern language records:

<u>Language</u>	<u>Titles</u>	<u>% of Total in Data Base</u>
Arabic	200	64
Urdu	55	42
Turkish	50	41
Persian	10	8

These statistics represent current titles only. No particular category of publication or subject area is given priority.

The only major difficulties we had encountered with LC input records were those caused by indexing errors and partial records. The former, due to a failure to input the indicator that suppresses the initial article of a title, have already been corrected by LC. Partial records, however, are somewhat more of a problem because they force us to defer our processing of a record until it has been fully updated and completed by LC. Like any record input by LC, partial records (records which contain only descriptive cataloguing, but no subject headings or classification) are locked and therefore cannot be edited on-line. The delay between the original input and the final completion of a record is great because of the low priority of Middle Eastern language records in LC's cataloguing assembly line. Because LC demonstrates no willingness to forego this procedure, as it accommodates their processing work flow, our only hope is that the time lag between initial input and final update will be reduced once their new priority system has been implemented.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

As suggested earlier, CONSER moved rapidly from the idea to the execution. At the time it was originally envisioned, CONSER was seen as a way to eliminate much duplication of effort in union list building. A great sense of urgency prevailed. Both the timing of the project and initial data base building efforts reflect this urgency. CONSER participants are now paying the price for this haste by expending a great deal of time and energy editing sketchy machine loaded records that contain a great number of errors. (This may be more true for Middle Eastern language records than for others.)

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Ironically, it takes more time to edit one of these records than to input a new one. A terminal operator cannot usually judge how to change an existing record. Therefore, a cataloguer's time is spent reviewing these records to recommend changes.

Underlying the goals set by CONSER and by extension all data base projects are certain assumptions about on-line bibliographic records. First, they are easier to store, update, and retrieve. Second, a greater number of access points are possible. For some, these assumptions are axiomatic. CONSER may be so dynamic, due to changes in rules and standards and shifts in administrative responsibility, that these assumptions, at least regarding serial records, are being challenged.

Although it is premature at this point to attempt a definitive evaluation of CONSER, it is nevertheless judicious to examine the project's goals and the measures taken to reach them thus far so that in the future, well-informed decisions can be made in planning projects that rely on manipulation of CONSER data. CONSER has grown in the course of its brief life-time from a file building project for the purpose of union list activities to one whose goal is high quality bibliographic records that will provide the basis of a national and eventually international serials bibliographic control system. Although these two goals are to a degree mutually inclusive, the order and manner in which they have evolved have created some serious obstacles that threaten their eventual realization. For example, until recently, both successive and latest entry cataloguing were permitted in the CONSER data base. The extent of duplication of records resulting from this practice will have to be carefully assessed before union list projects can be started. (Mrs. Glasby mentioned that while LC recognizes the latest entry records as a problem, no satisfactory solution is as yet in sight.) Challenging the realization of a national serials bibliographic control system is the lack of authority control in OCLC. When ARL issued its report of the National Serials Pilot Project in 1972, an authority file was envisioned as an integral part of the National Serials Data Program. CONSER has yet to and probably never will develop authority control. Institutions are now individually investigating procedures for how to implement it on a local basis.

In conclusion, before MELA would attempt to undertake a union list project using records in the CONSER data base, the following issues should be examined and discussed:

1. Who has central responsibility for the project, and how does this relate to that of other participants?
2. What standards will be set? Are they mutually compatible, and do they contribute positively to the outcome of the project?
3. What are the unique requirements of Middle Eastern language records, and are they being satisfied?

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REPORT ON CAIRO OFFICE by M. W. Albin

The past year was probably the high water mark of the Cairo program. To LC and participants we mailed 500,700 pieces, up 33% from the previous year, which was itself an all-time high. The likelihood that in FY '80 Egypt will lose its status as a special foreign currency country and the fact that we will have to cast our lot in Congress with competing demands for NPAC dollars make it unlikely that anything like the same volume of material will again pass through our office in one year. For participants this means contributing from their own budgets for materials that they will receive from Cairo and for administrative services such as preliminary cataloging, card production, and handling. For LC it means that we cannot be confident that Cairo will be a backstop for acquisitions from countries where, for political or commercial reasons, coverage is imperfect.

Let us turn from this vexatious problem to a review of some of our activities during the recent past. The 1977 Accessions List: Middle East carried an author-title index in the December issue. This was a compromise. It appeared that main entry access was inadequate and subject access too expensive to undertake. Title indexing was a middle way. If you find it useful, we will continue it; if you don't, we won't.

As you know, Syrian and Lebanese imprints, but for a half-dozen exceptions, are no longer acquired by Cairo. You should also be aware that LC has stopped receiving materials from these countries through Cairo; therefore the Accessions List will no longer work for these two sources.

We have limited acquisition of non-Egyptian monographs to imprints of the current and the two preceding years. North African coverage no longer goes back to 1970.

I want to thank you for reviewing your newspaper subscriptions. The limitations on titles that the Office acquires will save a great deal of money. Your airmail newspapers should begin arriving soon. Some of you have already begun to receive the first shipments.

I have asked in a memorandum dated October 23, 1978 that all participants review their periodical subscriptions. The fact of the matter is that within twelve months time it is virtually certain that you will have to pay for all the periodicals that you receive from Cairo. In order to give you additional information on which to base your selection, we have recently mailed you a supplement to the "Annual List of Serials" containing the prices of all the titles we now receive.

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Minutes of the Annual Business Meeting, November 8, 1978 - Undergraduate Library, University of Michigan.

The meeting was called to order by the President, Fawzi Khoury (University of Washington), who announced the following major agenda items: officers' reports, and discussion of the Library of Congress' tentative decision to romanize those parts of the catalog records of Arabic and Persian material which have heretofore appeared in the script itself. The Secretary-Treasurer gave her report, which appears elsewhere in this issue. The Editor's report appears elsewhere in this issue as well. Edward Jajko (Yale), Vice President-Program Chairman, reported on his attempt to arrange for a scholarly panel at this year's MESA meeting. Mr. Jajko said that the difficulty of assembling a group of committed panelists proved in the end too great and resulted in there being no MELA panel at MESA this year. He apologized to and thanked Eleazar Birnbaum (University of Toronto), who had volunteered a paper for such a panel. Mr. Jajko suggested that, in light of this experience, the MELA Program Chairman who wishes to arrange for a MELA-sponsored panel at MESA ought to begin his/her organizational effort at the previous year's MELA meeting.

Fawzi Khoury, President, clarified the account in the LC Information Bulletin of August 4, 1978 that he was the leader of the delegation of MELA members to the Library of Congress. Mr. Khoury acknowledged that Edward Jajko had done the actual organizational and managerial work that made the meeting possible.

Fawzi Khoury gave a detailed report of his trip to the Middle East to attend the Second Arab Conference on Bibliography in Bagdad, December 3-12, 1977. He visited Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Iran, Iraq, and Turkey, meeting other librarians, book dealers, and publishers partly with the aim of developing acquisitions relationships between local book dealers and the University of Washington library. He described the places he visited and, in particular, the conference itself. Mr. Khoury concluded his report by encouraging the new Executive Board to consider meeting once each year in addition to the annual meeting in November. The outgoing Executive Board found such interim meetings useful, he said.

Mr. Khoury also acknowledged the several letters he had received from MELA members proposing that MELA's Executive Board adopt and make known to the Middle East Studies Association a position on the issue raised by MESA's selection as 1979 MESA meeting site of Salt Lake City in Utah, a state which has not yet ratified the Equal Rights Amendment. Mr. Khoury sent copies of the letters to Richard Bulliet, MESA's Executive Secretary-Treasurer, and MELA's Executive Board did not discuss the matter. Finally, Mr. Khoury encouraged MELA members to make their support of legislation that would benefit libraries known to their state and national representatives, and he thanked the other members of the Executive Board for their help during the year.

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Martha Dukas announced her departure from the position of Middle East Library head at the University of Texas. She had the job description mailed to all MELA professional members and encouraged anyone interested to apply.

Chris Filstrup (New York Public Library) announced that COMRAD (Committee on Machine Readable Arabic Data) would meet the next morning, Thursday, November 9, and that interested non-members were welcome to attend.

Edward Jajko announced that he had received a letter from the editor of the Unesco Bulletin for Libraries inviting him or another MELA colleague to contribute an article to a 1979 issue of the Bulletin on Middle East collection building in the United States. Mr. Jajko is unable to do the article now, and any MELA member who would like to prepare it should write to or telephone Mr. Jajko.

After John Eilts (Michigan) repeated the hours and locations for MESA registration and for the book exhibits, Fawzi Khoury announced that all the standing committees organized at MELA's Ann Arbor workshop in 1975 are dissolved, owing to their inactivity. The newer COMRAD remains the only MELA committee. There were no objections to this action.

John Eilts reviewed the activity on the Arabic Script Union List during the year and welcomed contributions in almost any form. The list includes modern Turkish cataloging in addition to that in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish. If anyone not now a contributor would like to contribute to the list, he or she should write to John Eilts letting him know the expected quantity of contribution and what section of his/her collection is being represented.

Nominations for 1978-79 MELA Executive Board members were as follows: for Vice President-President Elect, David Partington (Harvard) and Nassif Youssif (Minnesota); for Secretary-Treasurer, Brenda Bickett (Georgetown) and Marsha McClintock (Ohio State); and for Editor, Chris Filstrup (New York Public Library) and Amnon Zipin (Ohio State).

John Eilts questioned the constitutionality of Edward Jajko's moving directly into the MELA presidency at this meeting, given the fact that he had been elected simply as Vice President and Program Chairman. Other members at the meeting stated that it was their understanding that passage during the summer of the bylaws amendment automatically making the Vice President the President the following year applied to the current officer and that it was assumed that Mr. Jajko was to be the next MELA President. Mr. Eilts' proposal for a separate election of Mr. Jajko as President received no support and was withdrawn.

After the candidates identified themselves to the group, ballots were distributed. Results were: for Vice President-President Elect, David Partington (16), Nassif Youssif (4), abstention (1); for Secretary-Treasurer, Marsha McClintock (11), Brenda Bickett (10); and for Editor, Chris Filstrup (19), Amnon Zipin (2).

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The next item of new business was discussion of the upcoming romanization by the Library of Congress of all its Arabic and Persian cataloging. Martha Dukas stated her opinion that the Library of Congress' decision to romanize was not based on a consideration of all its options. She noted that her colleague at the University of Texas, the South Asia librarian, is leading a campaign among other South Asia librarians to convince the Library of Congress to reverse its decision for full romanization. Ms. Dukas proposed that MELA attempt to do something similar. Chris Filstrup said that actually most South Asia librarians are in favor of romanization because of the variety of sub-continent scripts and that he believes it is unlikely that at this point the Library of Congress would reverse its decision to romanize. One member recalled that before the PL-480 program began, the Library of Congress issued its cards for Sanskrit and maybe Hindi in fully romanized form.

Edward Jajko said that he was asked by Dr. Selim of the Library of Congress to bring up the fact that the plans for romanization described in the LC Information Bulletin of October 27, 1978 are not supported by everyone in the Library. Drs. Atiyeh and Selim are opposed to them and would like a continuation of the use of the original scripts in cataloging. According to Dr. Selim, the Library of Congress is committed to listening to voices on both sides of the issue, although the "substantial amount of negative criticism" required to cause the Library to modify its plans would have to be substantial indeed, it appears, since other groups of area studies librarians have expressed to LC satisfaction with the prospect of fully romanized records.

Eleazar Birnbaum said that elimination of the title page transcription from the card would do away with the means by which the correctness of the romanization could be checked and would increase the range of possible card error.

Seyed Moosavi (Texas) pointed out that total romanization of cataloging does a disservice to those who do not read or write English and who must use university resources in Middle Eastern languages in research or course work. He also criticized what he saw as inaccuracies in the LC Persian romanization system.

Dr. Selim repeated that those who wish to write to the Library of Congress stating their support of or opposition to romanization must give reasons for their position and the advantages to LC of adhering to it.

Chris Filstrup said that once we assume that users must find their way through a sometimes inconveniently romanized catalog, the argument for total romanization fails when the user cannot be confident, for lack of representation of the title page script, that he has really found what he is looking for.

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Edward Jajko added that romanization of Arabic cataloging could make it difficult for users of the NUC in countries outside the United States to recognize particular Arabic editions described in a romanization scheme foreign to them without the reproduction of the script. He said that, according to what Dr. Selim said earlier, if there is a strong enough voice in favor of not romanizing Arabic, that language/script could be held out of the group scheduled for romanization.

Amnon Zipin (Ohio State) wondered whether it was appropriate for the position on romanization being prepared by COMRAD to be passed by the Executive Board as MELA's statement on the issue to the Library of Congress. Mr. Zipin moved that the Executive Board in consultation with COMRAD draw up a MELA stand on romanization of Arabic script in cataloging.

David Partington said that he would not vote to approve such a motion until he knew what the feeling of the Executive Board was and added that he is very strongly opposed to romanization.

There followed a discussion of the mechanism by which a written resolution produced by COMRAD and the Executive Board could be made known to the membership and, unless there is a negative response, conveyed to the Library of Congress by their deadline for such comment of January 15, 1979. An informal poll of the new Executive Board showed unanimous opposition to romanization at this time. Several versions of a motion were put forward embodying this as MELA's position but varying in the degree of opposition to be expressed and in the wording of the substantiation of MELA's position and in that of the alternate course to be recommended to LC. The motion finally accepted, proposed by Martha Dukas, is as follows:

That the Executive Board draft a letter to be circulated by December 15th to the membership of MELA and sent to Joseph Howard unless it is opposed by them stating that there is considerable opposition to total romanization and that the membership urges the Library of Congress to study further means of preserving the Arabic script in mixed records through index registers or other means.

Michael Albin (Library of Congress) suggested that, in light of LC's budgetary restrictions which may cause them to cease production of phototypeset Arabic cards and NUC copy if we oppose romanization immediately, a phrase should be inserted in the letter to Mr. Howard that MELA does this with the understanding that the card copy will continue to appear in the NUC until such time as LC makes its final decision.

Eleazar Birnbaum emphasized the importance of making it clear to the Library of Congress that the forthcoming letter to them represents the feeling of the entire MELA membership on the romanization issue and not simply that of the Executive Board.

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Chris Filstrup announced the time of the COMRAD meeting the following day and repeated that interested others were welcome to sit in.

The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

SECRETARY-TREASURER'S REPORT by Janet Heineck

There are at present 51 professional and 97 associate members of MELA, and 48 separate subscribers to MELA Notes. New members whose names have not yet appeared in MELA Notes are Suzan Akkan, Carol Hansen, Laurie Smith, and Todd Thompson. MELA's current savings account balance is \$1,682.21. The total expenses for producing Notes No. 15, comprising printing, postage and envelopes costs came to \$154.90. The Arabic Script Union List went into a second "printing" of 5 copies. All 25 copies have now been sold, with payment received for 18 of the copies to date.

EDITOR'S REPORT by James Pollock

During these first six years of our Association's life most of the distribution of MELA Notes has been handled by our friends here at the University of Michigan, both library staff and clerical help from the Near East Center, as I believe. This has been a tremendous assist, and one that is greatly appreciated, in the effort to keep lines of communication going among members of the Association. Indeed, communication is the purpose for which we organized, and the Notes is our mutual vehicle of expression. So now, we say for MELA a hearty thanks to John Eilts and his colleagues here for their valued assistance. And, we hereby resolve on everyone's behalf, that the next Editor will get further willing aid, plus an increased flow of written and verbal Notes material. If there is a type of feature you can't find anywhere in the ordinary library paper that is rampant as a beast upon your desk, please call for a presentation of that useful feature in the Notes. This is where ideas come from, a felt need.

With this report, Pollock's fingerprints are hereby lifted from the Editor's desk. Believe me, this has been an exhilarating job, and I am really glad to have had this experience and the vote of your confidence in the assignment. Of course, it is "a thing that extends a person", as the jailer in medieval Cairo would have said (in translation, that is) as he proudly pointed to the rack, on his guided tour for visiting politicians and other consumer groups. Nevertheless seriously, as one learns the trade of editing and publishing, one knows, because it is written both on his cuffs and on his casts, that more could be done if only there were more expertise in hand, more time, more money, more help, and more of the aggressive, beautiful and communicative librarian-scholars that we keep coming to

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MELA meetings to socialize with. That is, we need more translators like Abazar and Mike to bring us news from other Middle East librarians, more book-listers like Deirdre and Louis, and more travelogue artists like Ibn Battutah Eilts to tell us what dealers we may hopefully pass a few of our ace titles to in the acquisition effort. We need more library researchers like Dave and Marsha and Wolfgang who can ponder the chessboard of our profession and signal trends and options to this growing association of interested participants. We need more teachers of Middle East librarianship like Richard and Eleazar. And what would we do without both the traditional and computerized sleuthing of Miroslav Krek and Carl Petry?

Now we must take a second look at the costs of publication. We have a generous balance on hand in the treasury, and \$1,000 of that is a rotating Publications Fund by the 1977 action that we took. Most of that fund rotated during 1978, and came back into the treasury with a happy increase. The Arabic Script Union List project made all its sales, and as a side effect it has helped to generate interest in funding and producing the Near East National Union List at the Library of Congress. This has been a long-standing goal of this Association.

For the publication of the Notes we must expect to spend more of our smaller dollars, in order to do the job we all want to do. Michigan's Library Printshop, for instance, can no longer print for us at the nominal fee of a penny a page. And postage is a critical and increasing factor to recognize. Some of our minor office expenses in these first years have been carried by our employing institutions, but gradually we librarians will probably have to pay more of the price for our Association's professional activity. Since our dues are gauged to the size of our costs of publication and office work, perhaps in the Annual Meeting for 1979 we will be voting on how much to raise our dues and subscription prices.

When our Association began its existence six years ago you generously declared it was the province of the Editor to care for matters of paper size, type face and layout. This is the normal scope of an Editor's privilege and duty, and so I believe you will now reaffirm your recognition of these friendly, secure and unguarded boundaries. Your interests and preferences, with reasons, are welcome views and alternative slants needed. This outbound Editor has an old history of grade C-level performance in knowing how to use committee structures in evaluating these or other matters. Of course, convenience and readability are must items in publications, and the quality content level that the Notes always hopes for is reached by non-profit writers, all friends and members of MELA. It sure has been amazing how material has appeared for use when very much needed. Finally, a sincere thanks to this expressive community, and hearty encouragement to many minds yet in the labor room. Our new Editor will be on call when you are ready!

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COLLATION: News of Members

Richard Cooper is now acting Head of Berkeley's East Asiatic Library. His replacement as Islamic Librarian is James Weinberger, a doctoral candidate at the university.

Frances Morton has arrived on board LC as a Persian cataloger. In Dallas, Frances informed me that she had completed her training and was attacking LC's fabled backlog. When I wondered about compound names and other main entry pitfalls, Frances irrepressibly told me that she was reading up on tashayyu and the like and that she did not shunt aside problem titles in favor of simpler ones. She gave evidence of this by pointing northeast in the direction of her desk and pronouncing two shelves of Persian books cleared, cataloged and sent on their way.

Martha Dukas has returned to the Boston area, this time at Boston Public Library as coordinator of processing.

Abazar Sepehri is now Head Librarian, Middle East Collections, University of Texas at Austin. Abazar is also working on his doctoral thesis, a study of Persian collections in the United States, for the library school at the University of Chicago.

Janet Heineck has left the University of Chicago to live in the Seattle, Washington area. She is presently working for the telephone company.

At the University of Chicago, Paul Sprachman, a Ph.D. candidate in Persian literature, replaced Sepehri as Persian specialist, and Nabila Mango is now Middle East cataloger.

Beverly Brewster, Assistant Professor at Catholic University, died on September 25, 1978 at the age of 39. Dr. Brewster had taught at the Library Schools of Pahlevi University and the University of Tehran and had also served as a technical supervisor for the Tehran Book Processing and Documentation Center. A member of MEIA, Dr. Brewster's primary interest was international librarianship. Her American Overseas Library Technical Assistance was published by Scarecrow Press in 1986.