





The MELA 2020 conference will be held entirely online on the dates specified below. Sessions will generally be held between 11 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. EDT; specific times for each session may differ slightly.

How to register:

- Please register (and pay \$15 registration fee) for the meeting [AS A WHOLE](#).
- About two weeks before the first session, registrants will receive an e-mail inviting them to register separately for each session they wish to attend.
- Zoom links will be specific to YOU; please do not share them or post them publicly.

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- #MELALibs2020
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**Pandemic, Crisis, and Cultural Institutions:
The Intersection of Library Work
with COVID-19 and Other Crises**

People around the world have faced unusual challenges touching nearly every aspect of their lives due to the COVID-19 outbreak and its rapid spread. The 2020 MELA Program offers presentations that engage with the impact of such challenges on libraries and other cultural institutions providing service to users of collections centered around the study of the Middle East. Crises such as the current pandemic profoundly change how information professionals must do their work, usually requiring adaptations in a matter of weeks, to last for nobody can say how long. At present, while stay-at-home orders have kept users away from physical collections maintained on campuses and in various repositories, librarians and archivists have responded rapidly and nimbly to maintain the visibility and accessibility of collections and library services to everyone who uses them. The crisis has also created an opportunity for all of us to reexamine how best to respond to user needs, as well as how to continue creatively engaging with them.

We hope that this conference can initiate a robust and meaningful discussion on how this pandemic—or any other crisis—has shaped our past and present, and how it may affect our future.



Jump to detailed session descriptions (NOTE: all times listed are EDT)

MELA COMMITTEE PROGRAMMING

- 30 September (Wednesday), 11:30 a.m. - 1:45 p.m.: [MELA Cataloging Committee Program](#)
- 1 October (Thursday), 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.: [DSIG Virtual Roundtable on Arabic script OCR/HTR](#)

MELA BUSINESS MEETING

- 9 October (Friday), 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.: MELA Social/Coffee Hour!
- 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.: [MELA Business Meeting](#)

MECAP/LC REPORTS

- 9 October (Friday), 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.: [MECAP/LC Reports](#)

MELA VENDOR SHOWCASE

- 13 October (Tuesday), 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.: [MELA Vendor Showcase](#)

MELA PROGRAM SESSIONS:

- **MELA PROGRAM DAY 1:**
 - 19 October (Monday), 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: [Recovering Hidden/Historical/Special Collections](#)
 - 19 October (Monday), 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.: [Recovering a Hidden Collection of Ottoman Turkish MSS at Yale through Research & Teaching](#)
- **MELA PROGRAM DAY 2:**
 - 20 October (Tuesday), 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: [Remote access/DH/Web archiving in response to crisis](#)
 - 20 October (Tuesday), 1 p.m. – 2 p.m.: [CRL Panel: International & Area-Studies Collections in the Post-COVID Academic Environment: Prospects for Cooperative Collection Development](#)
- **MELA PROGRAM DAY 3:**
 - 21 October (Wednesday), 11 a.m. – noon: [Keynote address](#) by Dr. Lanisa Kitchiner, chief of AMED, LC (title TK)
 - 21 October (Wednesday), 12:15 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.: [Social justice/decolonization of the library](#)
 - 21 October (Wednesday), 1:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.: [COVID-19 & institutional responses](#)
 - 21 October (Wednesday), 3:15 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.: [Workshop: Wikipedia for Middle East Librarians](#)



PROGRAM DETAILS:

30 September (Wednesday), 11:30 a.m. – 1:45 p.m.:

- [MELA Cataloging Committee](#): “Improving Access to Middle Eastern Materials” [[back to list](#)]

11:30 a.m. – 12:45 a.m.

- “Kurdish Materials: The Problem of Romanization and Its Effect on Access” (*Michael Chyet, Senior Cataloger, Middle Eastern Languages, ASME/MESA, Library of Congress*)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - On the ALA/LC romanization scheme for Kurdish.
- “Urdu Resources: Obstacles to Discovery” (*Muhammad Younas, Subject Authority & Database Maintenance Specialist, UCLA*) & (*Magda Gad, Metadata Librarian for Middle East resources, Stanford*)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - The presentation discusses romanization, Unicode, and cataloging issues that affect the discovery of records for Urdu resources in databases.
- “Access to Arabic Records in Library Catalogs: Romanization and Scripts” (*Iman Dagher, Arabic & Islamic Studies Catalog Librarian, UCLA*)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - The presentation will discuss the issue of romanization in library records for Arabic materials, highlight some of the challenges, and propose some tips to overcome them and allow for better discovery.

- 12:45 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. Break

- 1:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

- “Improving access to Middle Eastern materials in OCLC through automation.” (*Pavel Angelos, Metadata Librarian, Arabic Specialty, Cataloging and Metadata Services, Princeton University*)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - A review of the possibilities of OCLC built-in macro editor, where we plan to show examples of automatization of a very well-known cataloging routines and automatic verification of compliance to the cataloging rules in the records. The logic of many typical rules can be described in Visual Basic script, a programming language which is understandable by OCLC. By creating such scripts, we can significantly ease the process of cataloging and decrease the time required to maintain a desirable level of quality in the records.



- “Improving Access: Adding Non-Latin Script via Automation.” (*Nora Avetyan, Armenian and Persian Cataloging Librarian, UCLA, and Peter Fletcher, International Team Leader, Cyrillic Catalog Librarian, UCLA Resource Acquisition & Metadata Services UCLA*)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - The presenters will discuss the process and completion of UCLA’s projects to add non-Latin parallel scripts in Cyrillic & Armenian to bibliographic records via batch-process automation in OCLC. We will discuss the process of automatically adding scripts to OCLC records, including problems that were encountered.

1 October (Thursday), 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.:

- [MELA DSIG](#): Virtual Roundtable on Arabic Script OCR / HTR (click here for [event details](#)) [[back to list](#)]

9 October (Friday), 11 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.:

- 10 a.m. – 11 a.m.: MELA Social/Coffee Hour!
- 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.: MELA Business Meeting ([agenda here](#)) [[back to list](#)]
 - PLEASE NOTE: THIS SESSION IS OPEN TO MELA MEMBERS ONLY.
 - Want to join MELA? [Click here to register for the meeting & join MELA!](#)
- 1 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. BREAK
- 1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.: MECAP/LC reports (agenda TK) [[back to list](#)]

13 October (Tuesday), 11 a.m. – 1 p.m.:

- MELA Vendor Showcase [[back to list](#)], to include presentations from the following vendors:
 - Quran Gateway
 - Zero Books
 - Project MUSE
 - East View
 - IranFarhang
 - Libra Books
 - Librakons
 - Hiperlink
 - Cambridge Archive Editions
 - OverDrive

19 October (Monday), 11 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.: MELA Program Day 1

- **11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Recovering Hidden/Historical/Special Collections** [\[back to list\]](#)
 - “The Collection of Early Arabic Printed Books at the Library of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest: A Brief Survey” – Dr. Ioana Feodorov (Sr Researcher, Inst. for Southeast European Studies, Romanian Academy, Bucharest)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - Arabic printing began, in Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Middle East, with the joint work of Antim the Iberian—a scholar, typographer and (later on) Greek-Orthodox Metropolitan of Wallachia—and Athanasios Dabbas, Metropolitan of Aleppo between two terms as Patriarch of Antioch (1684-1698, 1720-1724). Having printed two service books in Arabic and Greek in Wallachia (1701 and 1701), Dabbas left Bucharest in 1704, taking with him printing implements and knowhow. He founded a press in Aleppo in 1705 and printed eleven Christian texts in 1705-1711—service books, Saints’ sermons, and his own pastoral compositions. Sylvester, Patriarch of Antioch after Athanasios Dabbas (1724-1766), resumed the Arabic printing activity in the Romanian Principalities in 1745. Bringing Arabic type to Iași, the capital of Moldavia, he printed five books for the Antiochian Christians in 1745-1747 (including some anti-Catholic texts). Out of the 18 Arabic books printed in 1701-1747, the Library of the Romanian Academy in Bucharest owns seven copies—quite a rich collection, considering that these are very rare books. This paper briefly presents these seven books, the story of their acquisition, and the past and current research dedicated to them in Bucharest.
 - “Non-Western Manuscript Codices & the Schoenberg Database of Manuscripts” – Kelly Tuttle (Cataloger, MSS of the Muslim World, U. of PA) & Emma Thomson (Project Coordinator, Schoenberg DB of MSS)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - The recent emphasis on remote work and research caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has created opportunities for extended and targeted interaction with datasets. The Schoenberg Database of Manuscripts (SDBM), housed at the Schoenberg Institute for Manuscript Studies (SIMS), is an open-access, community-driven research tool that has benefitted from a surge of new users this year. The SDBM aggregates observations of manuscripts, which can represent sales, purchases, trades, catalog records, and even the personal knowledge of users. Entries all pertaining to one manuscript are linked together to form a “Manuscript Record.” This linking node gives scholars a much more complete view of the life and provenance of any given manuscript in the database. The SDBM is still distinctly lacking in Non-Western manuscript data, but the Middle East Librarian community can help to change that. SIMS has proposed to create the North American Census of Islamic Manuscripts (NACIM), which will collect and make publicly searchable manuscript descriptions and links for all known Islamic Manuscript codices housed in North America, both public and private. The SDBM will provide the technical infrastructure for this



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proposed Census. In this talk, we will walk the audience through the basics of how to use and contribute to the SDBM, including an explanation of its data model, site navigation, and how to add and import data. We will conclude with what you, as catalogers, librarians and metadata managers, can do to support this effort to resurface Islamic manuscript collections in North America.

- “The Story of the Abushâdy Archive” – Joy Garnett (Independent artist & author; Art Editor, *Evergreen Review*)

- **ABSTRACT:**

- This is the story of the Abushâdy Archive, its progression from a hoard of materials generated by my late grandfather, the Egyptian poet and bee scientist Ahmed Zaky Abushâdy (1892-1955), to its present home at the Archives and Special Collections of New York University Abu Dhabi Library. While the archive embodies a moment in modern Egyptian letters, it also reflects more personal narratives and gives us a glimpse of 20th-century Anglo-Egyptian marriage and Arab American family life. I will share the story of my efforts to make this family collection more broadly accessible, and show how over the course of a decade the archive was transformed from an array of extraordinary keepsakes to a houseable collection of scholarly value. I will tell the unlikely story of how this process culminated during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. **BREAK**

- 1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.: Panel: “Recovering a Hidden Collection through Research and Teaching: The Ottoman Turkish Manuscripts of Yale's Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library” [[back to list](#)]

- **ABSTRACT:**

- This panel will discuss a “hidden collection” of Ottoman Turkish manuscripts that has been built at Yale since 1870. Investigating and cataloging a collection of this kind requires expert knowledge of language and codicology that is often lacking even in major research libraries. As a result, such collections can remain for years on the shelves of their holding institutions, with their significance and value for study overlooked and maybe even dismissed as “exotic” or just too difficult to engage with. This panel will briefly investigate this collection’s history, its contents, and how a team of faculty, students, and librarians worked together through a collections-based language-instruction course to bring into the light a major “hidden collection” under-studied for 150 years. In a first for MELA, it will also include responses from two of the students who participated in the course, sharing their experiences as they engaged for the first time with historic primary sources. This work was showcased in the first-ever public symposium exclusively devoted to any of the Islamic manuscripts at Yale, held in December 2019.



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- “A Brief History of Yale’s Hidden Collection of Turkish MSS” – Roberta L. Dougherty (Librarian for MES, Yale U.)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - The Yale University Library’s collection of Ottoman Turkish manuscripts began with the first donation of three items by the pioneering American Orientalist Edward Elbridge Salisbury in 1870. My talk will briefly note the various personalities from whom Ottoman Turkish manuscripts were obtained for Yale (Salisbury, Carlo Landberg, Oskar Rescher, the bookseller Hans P. Kraus) and the history of the description of this collection, now held in the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library.
- “Deciphering Yale’s Turkish MSS and Utilizing Them in a Language Class” – Dr. Özgen Felek (Lector of Turkish & Ottoman, Yale U.)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale has a remarkable collection of Turkish manuscripts, dated from 1496 to 1933 A.D. and scattered in three different collections named Turkish Manuscript Collection, Turkish Manuscript Supplements Collection, Hartford Seminary Miscellaneous Manuscripts, which are still uncatalogued. Romances, occult texts, chronicles, mystical treatises, manuals of legal decisions, books on human and veterinary medicine, botany, as well as poetry collections of celebrated Ottoman poets have been waiting off-the-shelf for their readers since they joined the rare books and manuscripts compilation at the Beinecke Library in the nineteenth century. These texts have now found their curious readers as the collection was added to the syllabus of the “Reading and Research in Ottoman History and Literature” course taught at the Yale Department of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations in Fall 2019. After a brief introduction to the authors and genres of the Beinecke’s Turkish manuscripts, the second half of the presentation focuses on how these manuscripts were utilized to improve students’ grammar, reading skills of handwritten scripts, to enrich their vocabulary as well as to train them in their understanding of a manuscript while deciphering its marginalia, watermarks, date, place, author, copyist, later hands, as well as reading the handwritten scripts (paleography).
- “*Terceme-i cedīde fī’l-ḥavāṣṣi’l-müfrefe* (New translation for Special Terminologies)” -- Fatoş Derin Karadeniz (Yale ’20)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - Originally written in 1101-1102 AH (1689-1691 AD) by Muhammed bin ‘Alī, *Terceme-i Cedīde fī’l-Ḥavāṣṣi’l-Müfrefe* explores the medicinal benefits of various herbs and plants found in the Mediterranean region. Muhammed bin ‘Alī’s early interest in medicine as well as his desire to make the remedies more accessible to more people are what drove him to write this book. The Beinecke Library has a copy of the text copied in H. 1150-1200 (AD 1737-1786). It is a 102-folio text providing the names of numerous herbs and flowers in Arabic, Turkish, and “Frengi” (Italian) along with illustrations and descriptions as well as a glossary and comparative chart. Interestingly, a copy of *Herbario Nuovo*, dated 1585, by Castore Durants (a physician and botanist of the Italian Renaissance), is also available at the



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Beinecke. Durante's *Herbario Nuovo* reveals almost identical illustrations and descriptions (in Italian) to those found in Muhammed bin 'Alī's *Terceme-i Cedīde*. The present talk not only closely looks at these two texts but also combines Karadeniz's own knowledge of chemical compounds to these early modern medical texts.

- "A Book by Any Other Name: the *Kitāb-ı Şāhidī*, *Tuhfe-i Şāhidī* or *Luġāt-i Şāhidī*" – Sharon Mizbani (Ph.D. candidate, Dep't of Art History, Yale)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - In the summer of 2007, the Beinecke Library at Yale University exhibited and partially catalogued (in their digital collections) around thirty-five new Islamic manuscript acquisitions. Amongst these, a handful were designated as "Ottoman-Turkish" texts. One such text was a rather striking and unique copy of the *Kitāb-ı Şāhidī* (also known as the *Tuhfe-i Şāhidī* or *Luġāt-i Şāhidī*), by Şāhîdî İbrâhîm Efendî b. Sâlih Muġlavî (875-957/1470-1550). The *Kitāb-ı Şāhidī* is an Ottoman-Persian dictionary written in rhyme and in poetic meter; in its form and content, however, it defies any neat system of categorization, and indeed presents a challenge to the catalogues of libraries around the world. Not only does this "dictionary" fluidly switch between Persian and Turkish entry words, making it difficult to categorize as an "Ottoman-Turkish" text, its widespread popularity amongst speakers of several languages has also resulted in multiple titles for the work, leading to the creation of several different catalogue entries for its copies. Its prevalence amongst Persian, Arabic, and Turkish-language collections has also resulted in several distinct forms of transliteration for catalogue entries, often across different libraries, and sometimes within a single library system. However, rather than seeing these solely as discrepancies to be fixed, the challenges posed by this text can act as an entry point into revealing the divergences between our contemporary systems of classification and the knowledge production of the early-modern Ottoman Empire.

20 October (Tuesday), 11 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.: MELA Program Day 2

- 11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Remote access/DH/Web archiving in response to crisis [[back to list](#)]
 - "Hazine: Digital Humanities & Research during a Pandemic" – Heather K. Hughes (MES Librarian, U. of PA)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - Hazine is an online resource and public humanities project that was started by two Ottoman historians to provide archives and library guides for researchers working on the Middle East, North Africa, and Islamic societies. I was brought onto the team in 2016 to provide a librarian perspective. I invited Nadirah Mansour to join the team in 2018. They have since reworked the website to be more broadly inclusive of cultural heritage workers and highlight their contributions to research, while also featuring research techniques that address some of the unique challenges to Islamic and Middle East Studies research. While



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Hazine has already been highlighting and providing guidance on the many digital resources available, Hazine has continued to do so with the intention of supporting remote research during the pandemic. Hazine has also sought to provide good reading content, recognizing that digital humanities projects can provide entertainment during difficult periods of people being stuck at home. In my presentation, I will discuss the content and workings of Hazine, new directions, and ways for MELA members to contribute.

- “Open Access Materials in ME & Islamic Studies in the Time of COVID-19” -- Peter Magierski (MES Librarian, Columbia U.) & Sean E. Swanick (Librarian for ME & Islamic Studies, Duke U.)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - The COVID-19 pandemic forced the closing of libraries across the globe and severely limited access to study and teaching materials. This unprecedented situation increased focus on freely available online resources. Open Access and other free-to-read resources in Middle East and Islamic studies have been available for several years yet continue to present a challenge for librarians who struggle to monitor and distribute the information about them. As a result, students and scholars are left unaware of many important resources freely available on the web. In the presentation we will survey the existing sources of Open Access materials in Middle East and Islamic studies, including AMIR blog curated by Middle East librarians. We will discuss the need for collaborative efforts to raise the visibility of these resources in the future.
- “A Pandemic Project: Web Archiving Social Responses to COVID-19” – Deborah Schlein (Librarian for MES, Princeton U.) & Sean E. Swanick (Librarian for ME & Islamic Studies, Duke U.)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - As the Covid-19 pandemic swept the world, an Ivy Plus Web Archiving project was initiated by Dr. Ellen Ambrosone and Princeton University colleagues. The Ivy Plus Web Archiving program is operated from Columbia University by the incredible Samantha Abrams and is a collaborative initiative by the thirteen Ivy Plus members. The project, entitled Global Social Responses to Covid-19 focuses “on social responses to the covid-19 crisis, as represented in local news, NGOs, art, blogs and social media, and popular movements, rather than national news and national government initiatives.” Eventually, the project grew to 28 curators from around the globe, many of whom are not affiliated with Ivy Plus, collecting websites from every part of the world and in numerous languages. We propose to present on the methods we employed to scour and search the web, what we were able to find, a broad analysis of our findings and a final note on the mental energy. It is a unique experience to be searching for Covid-19 content while at the same time being aware of the suffering of so many. We will also discuss some of the other, related projects that led to how this project is curated.

- “Opening the Toolbox: Using Google Translate & Digiboard to Archive COVID-19 MENA Websites” – Joan Weeks (Head, NES, AMED, LOC)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - In future years, researchers may want to do comparative studies on the response of countries across MENA to the pandemic. One of the best ways to do this will be through a rich archive of websites from governments, non-governmental organizations, major news outlets and medical facilities that may disappear as the pandemic subsides. This proposal is for a workshop at MELA virtual conference that goes behind the scenes at the Library of Congress and provides an interactive demonstration using Google translate to locate authoritative Covid-19 websites across MENA in the vernacular languages with the required data elements, such as the website hosting organization, email contact address to request permission to crawl the site, justification for selection, summary, country and language. After the required elements for the websites are identified and collated in an Excel workbook, participants will see the entry of the data into Digiboard, the Library’s web archiving tool in the nomination process. The subsequent review process will be examined and the follow-on pre-crawl status will be discussed as it transitions to the web archive team. Catalogers then enter resources records for the sites in the pre-crawl status into the Electronic Resources Online Catalog (EROC) to create metadata. Once this metadata in place the sites are moved to the Library’s digital archived website collections platform at <https://www.loc.gov/websites/> for worldwide access.
- 12:30 p.m. – 1 p.m.: BREAK
- 1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.: CRL Panel: “International & Area-Studies Collections in the Post-COVID Academic Environment: Prospects for Cooperative Collection Development” [[back to list](#)]
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - The global pandemic has dramatically accelerated an existing crisis in research library collecting. The near-term restrictions in global supply of published literature—particularly material that is produced primarily in print—will be exacerbated by economic contractions in the publishing landscape as well as in library budgets. Though circumstances are still in flux on campuses across the United States and Canada, COVID-19 will likely have long-term impacts on the availability of research materials for scholarship in North America and beyond. Those responsible for collecting international and area studies material have expressed alarm at impending budget cuts that threaten to endanger the production of knowledge in the region. This potential loss imperils the collective mission of our institutions to ensure continuing access to cultural heritage, and undermines the values of diversity of collections and research perspectives to support intellectual inquiry. Cuts to international collecting, if enacted without regard to the collective whole, may result in the irrevocable loss of research resources for future scholarship. Through a series of information-gathering initiatives and timely conversations to shed light on how research libraries are responding to these challenges, CRL will identify opportunities for greater collaboration and collective action in collection management to ensure broadest coverage, and then devise an action plan to leverage this collective intelligence at the network level. This panel of members of the area-



studies community will discuss outcomes learned to date, focusing on impacts, challenges, and opportunities from the Middle East collection perspective.

- Michael Brewer, Senior Information Resources Officer, University of Arizona
- Mohamed Hamed, Middle Eastern & Near Eastern Studies Librarian, UC Berkeley
- Evyn Kropf, Librarian for MENA Studies and Religious Studies, University of Michigan
- Matt Marostica, AUL for Public Services and Collection Development, Stanford University
- Marlis Saleh, Bibliographer for Middle Eastern Studies, University of Chicago

Wednesday, 21 October, 11 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.: MELA Program Day 3

- 11 a.m. – noon: Keynote address: Dr. Lanisa Kitchiner (AMED, LC): “Confronting Critical Conversations in American Cultural Institutions” [\[back to list\]](#)
- Noon – 12:15 p.m. BREAK
- 12:15 p.m. - 1:30 p.m.: Social justice/decolonization of the library [\[back to list\]](#)
 - “Introducing the MELA Social Justice Committee” – Asuman Tezcan (Metadata Librarian/Coord. for Bulk Colls. & Outsourcing, Stanford U. Libraries)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - Current events have shown the crucial role of social justice within information services that are more relevant than ever. Today, it is common to see that libraries and information professionals advocate for social justice by raising voices for those who can't be heard, taking a stance locally and globally to create a just environment. Libraries define their missions as providing access to information on all subjects, from all points of view to information seekers. While librarians commit themselves towards these goals, they operate within a sociopolitical reality, and their mission is to mediate diverse voices and be sure that they are heard. The body of social justice and libraries-information services studies grew considerably in Western literature. Various organizations were formed to address social justice issues to promote diversity, equity, equality, and fair representation of different cultures. Unlike Western literature, social justice-library and information services related studies are still waiting for its researchers to contextualize the subject among the Middle East information professionals. The MELA Social Justice Committee aims to build a dialog among information professionals and promote all aspects of social justice in the Middle Eastern studies librarianship settings from a variety of contemporary collections management to cataloging, from reference services to information technologies. This presentation will introduce this committee to the MELA members and outline its aims, current initiatives, such as anti-Blackness and systemic racism in SWANA communities. This presentation seeks to open a dialog among other MELA committees and information professionals to look forward and begin to initiate collaborative works regarding social justice in our profession.



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- “Towards Decolonizing the Library” – Waseem Farooq (Librarian, AKU)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - From decolonizing the university to decolonizing knowledge. Over the past few years there has been an ever-increasing number of calls to decolonize within higher education institutes around the world. This has also included several calls to decolonize the library. How this has been interpreted and implemented has varied depending on the local contexts. I will elucidate what decolonization has meant in various contexts and will recapitulate the methods applied in the UK to decolonize the library and give some examples from other countries including Canada and the U S. Ultimately, I will highlight the areas in which the Middle East area specialists can contribute towards this endeavor and where past initiatives have already been undertaken without the label of decolonization, but fit precisely within the scope of decolonization. It is hoped that through highlighting the role of the Middle Eastern Librarians in the decolonization of the library and even towards effectively decolonizing knowledge, there will be some optimism of reinstating and securing the Middle East librarians’ positions and other area specialists as a prominent and sought-after profession.
- “Use of E-Books by Libraries in Times of Crisis: Exclusivity Rights vs Public Access to Knowledge” – Bashar H. Malkawi (Prof. of Law, U. of Sharjah)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - Copyright laws in the Middle East provide a set of exclusive rights to authors and publishers. These rights include the exclusive right to distribute and reproduce the copyrighted work. Although copyright creates monopolies, it should not be considered as a good in itself, but as a tool which can be used to achieve societal desirable objectives. Copyright laws include exceptions that permit use of work without prior authorization of the owner of a work. Some of these exceptions fall under three-step fair use test. Other limitations fall under the first sale doctrine. Due to these exceptions embedded in copyright law, libraries can lend books without the fear of being found in violation of copyright law. However, e-books differ from regular books as the library does not really own the book but rather it is given a license to download the book and then lend the e-book. Furthermore, technological advancements prevent re-selling of e-books. Due to the Coronavirus health crisis, many libraries in the regions allowed free access to its content including e-books. This raises questions regarding the validity of such practice. The purpose of this paper balance competing interests of right of the public to access information and right of publishers. The paper analyzes the exceptions available under copyright law that would permit lending e-books by libraries. In particular, the issue of fair use, which is somewhat unfamiliar in civil law countries of the Middle East, could provide an umbrella against copyright infringement.



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- “Team-Based Manipulation of Digitally Available Texts in a Remote Environment: Notes on Research & Pedagogy” – David Joseph Wrisley (Assoc. Prof. of DH, NYU Abu Dhabi) with: Nada Ammagui (Post-grad research fellow, NYU Abu Dhabi), Nora Barakat (Ass’t Prof. of History, Stanford), Liyan Ibrahim (undergraduate, NYU Abu Dhabi), Suphan Kirmizialtin (History Program affiliate, NYU Abu Dhabi), and Gorgen Tadevosyan (graduate, NYU Abu Dhabi).
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - Digital accessibility, in a globalized and cosmopolitan world, has ushered in wider and deeper engagement with sources that were once limited to smaller audiences with specific skills. It is also of fundamental importance for universities located in the Middle East, since they often lack subscriptions to costly digital resources and access to large research libraries. Our paper discusses how digital libraries not only expand access, but also change the kinds of research we do. We discuss collective research with digitized historical sources about the region, by researchers in the region, focusing on ways that during the pandemic our pedagogy and research workflows have changed, not only to conform to social distance, but to adapt to the digital nature of our sources. We argue that information literacy is important for navigating the large amount of digitized material available, but also that data literacy is essential for knowing how to manipulate, enrich and analyze data in different formats in order to interpret it. Working together during the pandemic has prompted the various stakeholders in our project to reconsider workflows, to entertain hybrid modes of communication and mentorship and to explore new ways of interacting with information. Focusing on methods for working with textual data (annotation, extraction, transcription, HTR) has also opened the door to a new creativity and independence in asking questions about primary sources, allowing users to take research into new directions and to examine the ways that knowledge about the region has been constructed.
- 1:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. **BREAK**
- 1:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.: **COVID-19 & institutional responses** [[back to list](#)]
 - “User Services at QNL during the COVID-19 Pandemic” – Amani Alyafei (Head, Science, QNL) & Maryam Al-Mutawa (Head, Spec. Colls Access, QNL, Qatar)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - Qatar National Library temporary closed as a precautionary measure starting in mid-March until further notice due to the World Health Organization declaring COVID-19 a global pandemic, in line with the Qatar Ministry of Health’s recommendation of social distancing measures, and in the interests of the safety and health of the Library’s patrons and staff. The sudden closure of the Library building had an impact on and created challenges for the Library’s ability to provide its usual services and resources to its patrons. This presentation will highlight the procedures taken by Qatar National Library to fulfill user services during the pandemic. It will focus on the digital services and online resources of the special and general collections. The presentation is divided into two parts.



- **Part 1:** Research and Learning services and resources for the public before and during Covid-19. The first part will be a short introduction to the Research and Learning department's usual services and resources for adult users. It will highlight three areas: the main collection, reference services and public programs, and the impact of the Library building's closing on each of them. Then it will present the role of the Library and the librarians in learning and adjusting to keep up with the patrons' needs and stay connected during this difficult time. Finally, it will provide some examples of the positive effects of the Covid-19 crisis for both staff and patrons.
 - **Part 2:** Special Collections services during Covid-19. This section will give a brief about the Heritage Library department and user services, pointing out how the services have been affected by the closure. Then, it will highlight the digital services we provide and the procedures done to enhance the digital content and services during the pandemic, including virtual tours, the digital repository and the Qatar Digital Library website.
- “Pandemic & Compounded Crisis at Archives & Spec Colls Dep't of the AUB Libraries: Where Are We Heading?” – Samar El-Mikati El-Kaissi (AUL for Archives & Spec Colls, AUB, Lebanon)
- **ABSTRACT:**
 - Lebanon has been facing severe economic, financial and social crises since October 2019. With demonstrations, strikes, street blockage, and civil unrest, the people of Lebanon were protesting against the wide spread corruption of the political and financial authorities to recover their stolen resources. In this atmosphere, the first case of Covid-19 was detected in Lebanon in February 2020. Many more cases were reported, but the Lebanese authorities faced the pandemic by declaring a state of general mobilization. By 16 March the American University of Beirut took necessary steps and followed a social-distancing policy, started online teaching, and limited the workforce on campus.

The AUB Libraries faced the situation professionally. The administration set new procedures for remote work of its team. But how can librarians work with collections remotely? How can patrons access our books remotely? How can we introduce electronic theses submission procedures to frustrated graduate students who already had difficulties with face-to-face guidance? How can heads ascertain that staff members can work efficiently amidst chaos?

As all library sections, the Archives Department decided to work on projects set swiftly and prudently. The work plan can be summarized as compiling finding aids for processed collections, online submission of theses and dissertations implemented for the first time at the libraries, updating bibliographic records and faculty directory and indexing handwritten AUB minutes of meetings, etc. Many challenges were faced among them were technical difficulties for staff working from home, University financial difficulties, foreign workers upgrading the stacks HVAC system, need to access archival collections for checking inaccurate information, and some glitches that students faced in submission of theses, and many more. But where will all of this lead us?



- “Lockdown and Locked Out of Access to Knowledge?: Radical Collaboration to Maintain Continuity of Service during the Global Pandemic” – Jessica Holland (Archivist, ACOR, Jordan)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - Jordan has experienced one of the strictest lockdowns in the world in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, with driving banned, and leaving the house restricted. As such, the ACOR Library and Archive had to react fast to ensure that we were still able to serve our user communities. During this international crisis, with airports and borders closed until further notice, we were particularly seeking solutions to keep serving those who had planned to travel to Jordan for research or to lead educational tours, and who now found those opportunities for advancing knowledge postponed indefinitely. In recent years, ACOR has invested time and energy into digitizing a large proportion of its interdisciplinary archives which reflect the region during the past tumultuous 80 years, recording significant instances of cultural, and intangible, heritage. Due to the rapid adoption of the division of digitization labor (into: slide scanning, photo editing, quality-control, and metadata description), the geographically-challenged team were able to process and publish 3,000 images through the ACOR Photo Archive; almost reaching our target of 30,000 images online. This was achieved through rapid-scanning in the 3 days’ notice before military curfew was enforced, and was sustained as one team member was living at ACOR. This experience lends a new importance to “disaster planning” and we seek to share lessons learned, and to start conversations on how we as a community can provide support in planning for the unprecedented, and ensuring that the needs of our staff, and our user communities are met.
- “Digitizing an Archaeology Museum's Travelling Exhibition to Support Remote Learning in CA Public Schools” – Samuel D. Pfister (Colls. Mgr, The Bade Museum of Biblical Archaeology, Pacific School of Religion, Calif.)
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - On March 17, 2020 the City of Berkeley, California and surrounding counties issued a mandatory Shelter-In-Place order that effectively closed non-essential businesses, including cultural institutions, schools, and museums. Staff at the Badè Museum of Biblical Archaeology at the Pacific School of Religion shuttered the museum and have not, as of the writing of this abstract, returned since mid-March. The closure of facilities has caused an obvious disruption in operations, including the indefinite cessation of the museum’s educational travelling exhibit titled “Daily Life in an Ancient Judean Town.” The exhibit features a selection of objects from the museum’s Tell en-Nasbeh Collection as well as descriptive text panels and instructions for handling and using the objects. Prior to shelter-in-place restrictions, the exhibit primarily served local public-school classrooms as a teaching aid felicitous to California’s Grade Six curriculum requirements. Due to the shift to online learning for California Public Schools, staff at the Badè Museum have endeavored to digitally reformat the core elements of the exhibit to continue to render our collections a serviceable resource for students. This paper presents the steps taken to create a digital exhibit intended for use in California Public School’s Grade Six social studies classrooms amid ongoing restrictions that continue to bar public access to the museum’s collections.

Noting the related challenges of remote collaboration and accessibility of institutional assets, this paper considers the potential impact and effectiveness of digital educational aid delivery and museums' roles, generally, in collaborating with public schools on curriculum development.

- 3:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.: BREAK
- 3:15 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.: Workshop: “Wikipedia for ME Librarians” – AJ Robinson (Subj. Librarian for Islamic Studies, South Asian Studies, & WGS Studies, Wash. U. in St. Louis) [[back to list](#)]
 - **ABSTRACT:**
 - This interactive workshop will guide participants through various aspects of Wikipedia projects used by librarians for instruction, reference, and enhancing records. We will assess relevant topics for their coverage in different languages. I will demonstrate the Wikipedia Visual Editor and encourage participants to make a simple Wikipedia edit. This will lead into a discussion on opportunities to collaborate and utilize tools to improve access to Middle Eastern materials.

Tuesday, 27 October, noon – 2 p.m. EDT: MEMP general meeting ([details here](#))

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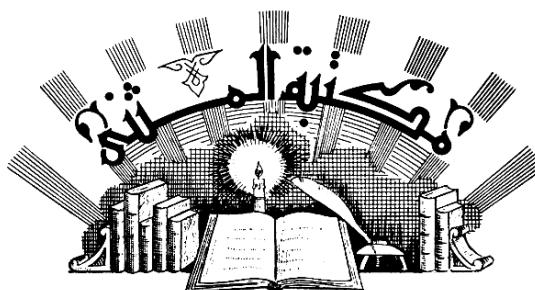
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