

## **Middle East Librarians Association 2021 annual meeting Call for Papers**

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The MELA 2021 Annual will be held online between Monday October 25th to Friday October 29th between 10:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. EST. Please note that [registration](#) is opened. The full programme will be shared shortly.

### **Meeting:**

At this time, the Programming Committee is planning for an in-person conference in Montreal, QC. However, necessary arrangements will be made to allow for virtual participation. Further details about the meeting, annual dues payment and registration fees will be shared closer to the meeting. Please note MELA cannot provide financial support for travel expenses.

### **Conference Theme:**

This year's conference will build on discussions initiated during last year's conference. We will focus on: **"Reimagining Middle East Studies librarians and archivists' role(s) in a time of social and political crisis"**

Librarians and archivists have long been adapting to a changing professional environment and redefining their professional identities. The past year alone witnessed the outbreak and unfolding of a worldwide pandemic and the emergence of global anti-oppression movements, which magnified inequities within institutions of learning and outside of them. These crises compelled librarians and archivists to engage in a critical reflection on their role(s) and responsibilities as information professionals in the societies they live in.

The COVID-19 pandemic reduced access to physical spaces and materials, heightened digital divides, and exacerbated existing inequalities in the access to information. In addition, the curtailment of fieldwork resulted in a lack of access to physical multilingual materials, and obstacles to conducting research traditionally done in-person. In response to these challenges, librarians and archivists sought to bolster digital collections, resources, and projects, accelerate digitization activities, and address disparities in technology access.

The Black Lives Matter movement revived by the murder of George Floyd in May 2020 spread far beyond the frontiers of the United States, and resulted in a global reckoning with racism and white

supremacy. Library associations and libraries that have had a long history of ignoring social justice movements citing the need to maintain neutrality, issued statements condemning racial injustice and, along with academic and cultural institutions, massively engaged in tackling inequalities, and confronting racism.

As we write these lines, the world is witnessing -once again- the brutal effects of settler colonialism in Palestine, calling for librarians and archivists to engage in a critical reflection on the influences of colonialism and white supremacy on their professional practice. Amidst the most recent, violent attacks against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, MELA affirmed its solidarity with the Palestinian people in [this statement](#), and outlined the imperative of supporting the Palestinian struggle in the fight against all forms of oppression, racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and anti-Blackness.

We hope that this conference will prompt collective and transformative discussions on how Middle East librarians and archivists can engage in the ongoing work of reimagining their role(s) in the community and outside of it, and participate in the making of a more just and equitable field and world.

Presentations focusing on the topics below, and other topics as long as they relate to the main theme, will be considered:

- Remote teaching and learning, including instructional design and accessibility
- Critical and inclusive pedagogy
- Physical and electronic collections
- Digital Humanities, and related challenges
- Community outreach and engagement
- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in librarianship
- Critical and ethical bibliographic description and control vocabulary

**Submission guidelines:**

- Proposals may be submitted via [the online form by July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2021, at 11:59 p.m. EST](#)
- Successful participants will be notified by July 16<sup>th</sup>, 2021.