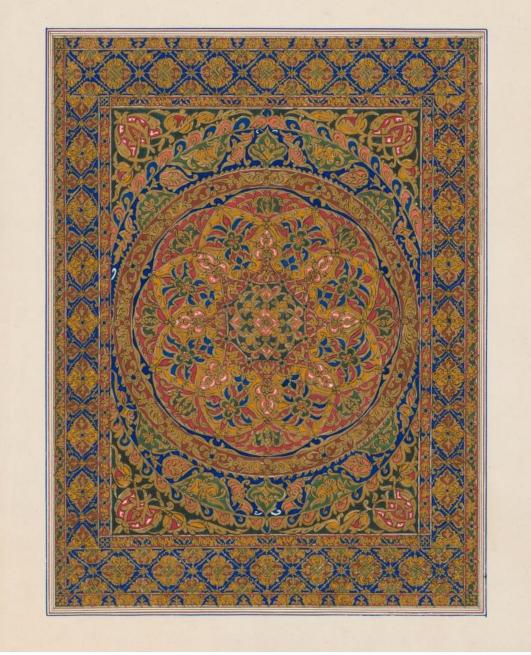# MIDDLE EAST LIBRARIANS ASSOCIATION (MELA)

2021 CONFERENCE PROGRAM

McGill University - Rare Books and Special Collections – MSP leaf 007

The MELA 2021 conference will be held online from Monday October 25th to Friday October 29th. All sessions are scheduled daily between 10:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. EDT. Please note specific times for each session may differ slightly.

REGISTRATION:
- Please register for the meeting AS A WHOLE
- Zoom links will be shared a couple of weeks before the meeting, and a reminder will be sent on the first day of the conference
- If you intend on attending the Business Meeting, you will need to pay your dues
- The link for the business meeting will be specific to YOU; we ask you do not share or post publicly

FOLLOW & SHARE MELA CONFERENCE UPDATES:
- #MELALibs2021
- @MidEastLibs
- MELA on Facebook
- MELA on the Internet

CONTACT US

MELA programming Committee members:
- Salma Abumeeiz, UCLA
- Magda El-Sherbini, Ohio State University
- Anaïs Salamon, McGill University

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MELA
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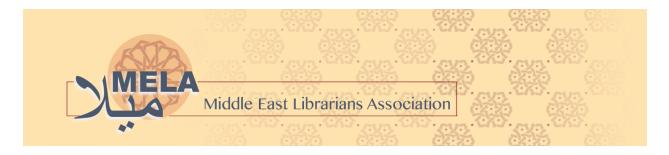
ARTHUR FOURNIER
fine & rare

CONFERENCE THEME

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, heighted 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.

SUMMARY OF SESSIONS

DAY 1 - 25 October (Monday)

- 10:30 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. EDT: MELA EDUCATION COMMITTEE & SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE JOINT ROUNDTABLE: Strategies for Working through Times of Precarity and Scarcity in Middle East Librarianship
- 12:30 – 2:30 p.m. EDT: PANEL #1: Librarianship in times of Precarity
- 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. EDT: MELA COMMITTEE ON CATALOGING (COnC) MEETING

DAY 2 - 26 October (Tuesday)

- 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. EDT: MELA ENDANGERED LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES COMMITTEE (ELAC) ROUNDTABLE: Collaborations and Partnerships for Endangered Archives and Libraries: Case Studies from the Past, Present, and Future
- 12:30 – 2 p.m. EDT: PANEL #2: Highlighting inaccessible MENA materials during a pandemic
- 2:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. EDT: MELA COMMITTEE ON CATALOGING (COnC) PROGRAMMING

DAY 3 - 27 October (Wednesday)

- 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. EDT: MELA DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP INTEREST GROUP (DSIG) ROUNDTABLE: Digital Scholarship: Who's It For?
- 12:30 – 2 p.m. EDT: PANEL #3: Sustainability, Access, and Advocacy: Current MENA DH Initiatives
- 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. EDT: WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA COMMITTEE MEETING
- 4:00 – 5 p.m. EDT: SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING

DAY 4 - 28 October (Thursday)

- 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. EDT: MELA SOCIAL/COFFEE HOUR!
- 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS REPORTS
- 2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. EDT: MELA VENDOR SHOWCASE

DAY 5 - 29 October (Friday)

- 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. EDT: MELA BUSINESS MEETING
- 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT: MELA METRICS WORKING GROUP REPORT AND PRESENTATION
- 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. EDT: ENDANGERED LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES COMMITTEE (ELAC) MEETING

DETAILED PROGRAM

DAY 1 - 25 October (Monday)

- 10:30 a.m. – 12:05 p.m. EDT: MELA EDUCATION COMMITTEE & SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE JOINT ROUNDTABLE: Strategies for Working through Times of Precarity and Scarcity in Middle East Librarianship

Moderator: Salma Abumeeiz, Research and Instruction Librarian (Online Learning & Scalable Teaching), University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), USA

Chat moderator: Pauline Lewis, Middle East Receiving and Copy Cataloging Specialist, Stanford University Libraries, USA

With:

- o Sarah DeMott, Research Librarian specializing in Middle East Studies, Harvard University, USA
- o Amanda Hannoosh Steinberg, Visual Resources Librarian for Islamic Art and Architecture, Harvard University, USA
- o Heather Hughes, Middle Eastern Studies Librarian, University of Pennsylvania, USA
- o Asuman Tezcan, Metadata Librarian/Coordinator for Bulk Processing & Outsourcing, Stanford University, USA
- o Balsam Haddad, Head Librarian, American Islamic College, USA

- 12:30 – 2:30 p.m. EDT: PANEL #1: Librarianship in times of Precarity

Moderator: Salma Abumeeiz, Research and Instruction Librarian, University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), USA

- o *Building Middle Eastern Collections Without a Subject Specialist, Maintaining Momentum Through a Pandemic: The University of Virginia Experience* / Keith Weimer, Research Librarian for History and Religious Studies, University of Virginia, USA
- o *Mind the Gap: Developing remote instruction to overcome the staff digital divide* / Joan Weeks, Head, Near East Section and Turkic World Area Specialist, Library of Congress, African and Middle Eastern Division, Near East Section, USA

- o *Knowledge Production Project: Identifying Trends in 2021* / Jessica Holland, Manager of Knowledge Production and Pedagogy, Arab Studies Institute & Reneta Din, Project Manager for the Knowledge Production Project, Arab Studies Institute, USA/Lebanon
- o *The role of Iranian rural public libraries in the development of the rural economy* / Leili Seifi, Associate Professor in Library and Information Science, Birjand University, Iran

- 3:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. EDT: MELA COMMITTEE ON CATALOGING (COnC) MEETING
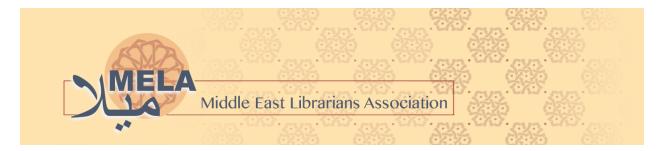
DAY 2 - 26 October (Tuesday)

- 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. EDT: MELA ENDANGERED LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES COMMITTEE (ELAC) ROUNDTABLE: Collaborations and Partnerships for Endangered Archives and Libraries: Case Studies from the Past, Present, and Future

Moderator: Sharon C. Smith, Curator for Middle East and North Africa, History and Religion, Arizona State University, USA; Discussants: Endangered Libraries and Archives Committee members

- o *The Bosnian Manuscript Ingathering Project: Resurrecting Copies of Burned Manuscripts* / András Riedlmayer, Emeritus Aga Khan Librarian for Islamic Architecture, Harvard University, USA
- o *The Palestine Land Studies Center: Activating an Archive and Preserving History* / Dr. Howayda Al-Harithy, Founding Director, & Michael Avanzato, Research Coordinator, Palestine Land Studies Center (PLSC), American University of Beirut, Lebanon
- o *The Hill Museum and Manuscript Library: Partnerships for Manuscript Digitization and Cultural Preservation* / Josh Mugler, Curator of Islamic Manuscripts; Walid Mourad, Field Director for the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia; & Catherine Walsh, Director of Cataloging, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, USA

- 12:30 – 2 p.m. EDT: PANEL #2: Highlighting inaccessible MENA materials during a pandemic

Moderator: Anaïs Salamon, Head, Islamic Studies Library, McGill University, Canada

- o *Finding new ways to open up and engage with India Office records on the Qatar Digital Library* / Curstaidh Reid, Gulf History Cataloguer, British Library, UK, Dr. Mariam Aboelezz, Translation Support Officer, British Library, UK & Dr. David Woodbridge, Gulf History Cataloguer, British Library, UK

- o *Reimagining Home: Armenian Memorial Books at the Library of Congress* / Khatchig Mouradian, Armenian and Georgian Area Specialist, Library of Congress, African and Middle Eastern Division, Near East Section, USA

- o *Creating the "Google for Ottoman Turkish": Wikilala* / Harun Tuncer, PhD Lecturer, Istanbul Aydin University, Turkey

- • 2:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m. EDT: MELA COMMITTEE ON CATALOGING (COnC) PROGRAMMING

- o WORKSHOP: *Subject Analysis* (2:30 p.m. – 3:25 p.m. EDT)

Margaret W. Hughes, Metadata Librarian for Africana, Social Sciences & Humanities; Head, Classification Unit; Team Lead, Metadata Creation Unit, Stanford Library, USA

- o PANEL: *Toward Access and Discovery* (3:30 p.m. – 4:10 p.m. ET.)

Cataloging manuscripts in the IFLA-LRM model / Dr. Jean N. Druel, OP, the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies (IDEO), Cairo, Egypt

Wikidata and Libraries, a Potential Platform to Explore / Iman Dagher, Arabic & Islamic Studies Metadata Librarian, UCLA Library, USA

- o ROUNDTABLE: *Cataloging Issues in OCLC* (4:20- 5:00 pm ET.)

Unicode in OCLC: what can go wrong? / Pavel Angelos, Metadata Librarian, Arabic Specialty at Princeton University Library, USA
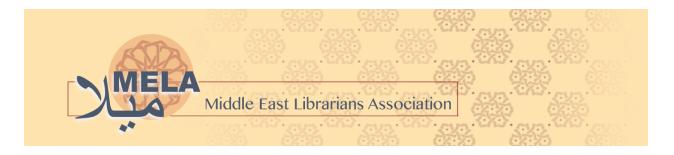

DAY 3 - 27 October (Wednesday)

- • 10:30 a.m. – 12 p.m. EDT: MELA DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP INTEREST GROUP (DSIG) ROUNDTABLE: Digital Scholarship: Who's It For?

Moderator: Dale J. Correa, Middle East Librarian and History Coordinator, The University of Texas at Austin, USA

With:

- o Omnia Fathallah, Subject-Matter Expert – Librarian, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Egypt

- o Abdelaziz Galal, Arabic & Islamic Studies and Communication & Media Sciences Librarian, Zayed University, UAE

- o Michael Nashed, Electronic Publishing Specialist, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Egypt

- o Naz Özkan, Reference and Outreach Librarian, Koç University, Turkey

- o Dalal Rahmeh, Data Services Librarian, American University of Beirut, Lebanon

- 12:30 – 2 p.m. EDT: PANEL #3: Sustainability, Access, and Advocacy: Current MENA DH Initiatives
Moderator: Magda el-Sherbini, Professor & Head, Middle East & Islamic Studies Library, Ohio State University, USA
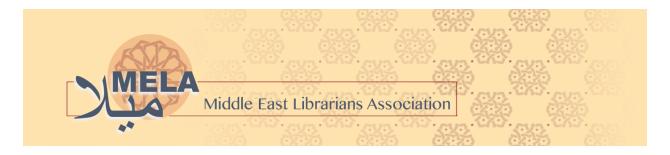
  - *Making Arabic OCR Sustainable in the University Library Environment* / Dale Correa, Middle East Studies Librarian & History Coordinator, The University of Texas at Austin, USA

  - *Bridging the Digital Divide: Working with Transliterated Proper Names in Cultural Collections* / David Wrisley, Professor of Digital Humanities, New York University (NYU) Abu Dhabi & Almazhan Kapan, Intern at the OpenGulf Research Group, UAE

  - *Recognizing Ottoman Turkish Print with Müteferriqa: A First Step in Digital Humanities* / C. Ozan Ceyhan, Senior Ottoman Specialist, Miletos R&D Inc., Turkey

- 2:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. EDT: WEB AND SOCIAL MEDIA COMMITTEE MEETING
- 4:00 – 5 p.m. EDT: SOCIAL JUSTICE COMMITTEE MEETING

DAY 4 - 28 October (Thursday)
- 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. EDT: MELA SOCIAL/COFFEE HOUR!
- 12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS REPORTS
  - *Cairo Office/Middle East Cooperative Acquisitions Program (MECAP)*
  - *Islamabad Office/Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan Cooperative Acquisitions Program (PIACAP)*
  - *African and Middle Eastern Division*
  - *Middle East/South Asia Cataloging Section*
- 2:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. EDT: MELA VENDOR SHOWCASE

DAY 5 - 29 October (Friday)
- 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. EDT: MELA BUSINESS MEETING (AGENDA)
- 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT: MELA METRICS WORKING GROUP REPORT
- 2:00 – 3:00 p.m. EDT: ENDANGERED LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES COMMITTEE (ELAC) MEETING

PRESENTATIONS ABSTRACTS

DAY 1 - 25 October (Monday)

MELA Eᴅᴜᴄᴀᴛɪᴏɴ Cᴏᴍᴍɪᴛᴛᴇᴇ & Sᴏᴄɪᴀʟ Jᴜꜱᴛɪᴄᴇ Cᴏᴍᴍɪᴛᴛᴇᴇ ᴊᴏɪɴᴛ ʀᴏᴜɴᴅᴛᴀʙʟᴇ: *Strategies for Working through Times of Precarity and Scarcity in Middle East Librarianship*

Middle East Librarianship is experiencing unprecedented precarity. Financial pressures are not only affecting endowments and collecting agendas, but also slowing hiring initiatives and increasing retirement incentives straining the available workforce. As hiring lines freeze, daily work becomes consolidated and more capacious. Once a specialized role, Middle East Librarianship is becoming a more generalized global field encompassing an increasingly vast geographical, thematic, and chronological scope that is supported with supplemental staffing by student interns, library liaisons, and information technicians. Not only is funding limited, the once urgent need for area studies expertise is waning as area studies in general is losing academic ground in American higher education. Included in this grim portrait, travel bans, legal restrictions for work authorization, and competition from the desolate academic job market are among some of the challenges in the field of Middle East Librarianship in the United States. This session is a call to come together to take into account the current state of the field and identify pathways forward. Please join us in sharing ways to strategically advocate for library resources, manage expanding job responsibilities, and set proactive collection agendas.

Pᴀɴᴇʟ #1: Lɪʙʀᴀʀɪᴀɴꜱʜɪᴘ ɪɴ ᴛɪᴍᴇꜱ ᴏꜰ Pʀᴇᴄᴀʀɪᴛʏ

Building Middle Eastern Collections without a Subject Specialist, Maintaining Momentum through a Pandemic: The University of Virginia Experience / Keith Weimer, Research Librarian for History and Religious Studies, University of Virginia

Like a number of libraries with significant collections in Middle Eastern history and culture, the University of Virginia Library lacks a dedicated subject specialist with expertise in the languages and culture of the region. In 2019, the Library made a renewed commitment to building its collections in Middle Eastern materials in ways that better supported the expressed needs of faculty and graduate students. A specialist position has not yet been created, but the Library has sought to improve collection of Middle Eastern materials through coordinated faculty input; a cooperative relationship between the
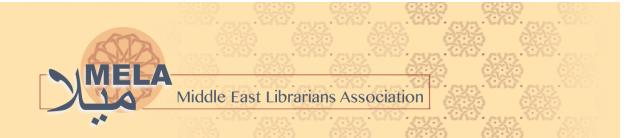
Arts and Humanities and Collections teams; a redeployment of approval plans; and leveraging Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Open Access (OA) efforts at the University. Various assessment measures--benchmarking against institutions with comparable programs related to Middle Eastern Studies, circulation statistics, and a follow-up survey of the faculty--indicate that U.Va. was able to strengthen our collections and sustain momentum even during the pandemic, though the importance of a dedicated subject specialist remains critical to our users.

Mind the Gap: Developing remote instruction to overcome the staff digital divide / Joan Weeks, Head Near East Section and Turkic World Area Specialist, Library of Congress, African and Middle Eastern Division, Near East Section

After the Library of Congress closed for COVID in March 2020, in a matter of week, many staff were able to adapt quickly by using their own computers and devices at home to begin to telework and gradually they received special laptops with web conferencing applications. Others fell further and further behind in their work because they did not have computers at home or had never used the web conferencing or even experienced remote learning. Teleworking during COVID opened up a digital divide among staff. As the closure of the Library stretched into more months, it was imperative that instructional strategies be developed to bring those on administrative leave in to receive a laptop and then come up with telework projects where they could accomplish Library work remotely. This presentation will look at strategies for the staff who were struggling with the new technologies and isolated from the traditional face to face instruction. By doing a skill assessment with the staff and then designing sequential leaning grounded in practical job skills, staff gradually acquired new skills. A particular focus will be on ways to promote a safe inclusive learning space and promoting multiple approaches to break down the barriers and challenges the staff had not only with the technology but with learning in the new online environment. These strategies will also readily adapt to students, faculty and researchers as libraries open up and librarians need to develop new methods of library instruction.

Knowledge Production Project: Identifying Trends in 2021 / Jessica Holland, Manager of Knowledge Production and Pedagogy, Arab Studies Institute & Reneta Din, Project Manager for the Knowledge Production Project, Arab Studies Institute

The Arab Studies Institute's (ASI) flagship digital humanities resource, the Knowledge Production Project (KPP), subverts the norm of the Middle Eastern Studies discipline by turning the lens back on the

English-language producers of knowledge about the Middle East themselves: the think tank experts, scholars, and U.S. Government institutions involved in shaping public perceptions of the region. The stalling of in-person activities due to the pandemic propelled ASI archivists to dedicate their focus to the re-design of the KPP data visualizations and website. Understanding that the production of and access to knowledge is never an impartial or equitable process, as an open-access resource, KPP provides the public with the data to redress these disparities, and, in doing so, hold those in power to account. The updated KPP website achieves this through three components: a searchable archive and data visualization of 150,000+ records of academic, policy, and audio-visual production about the Middle East, a Think Tanks explorer which allows users to compare financial information and publication records across institutions, and an immersive data visualization which illustrates how power circulates within relatively confined networks by portraying the movement of individual experts to and from think tank and government positions. This presentation will showcase how KPP's visualizations can help users identify trends within knowledge production about the region, share lessons learned from working with data visualization specialists, and examine how librarians and archivists can engage in critical and inclusive pedagogy through digital humanities.

The role of Iranian rural public libraries in the development of the rural economy / Leili Seifi, Associate Professor in Library and Information Science, Birjand University

Public libraries in Iran have a prominent status because of their role in the elevation of the literacy level and awareness of the segments of society. They are one of the main institutions in the contemporary world for presenting free and equal services to all individuals. Economic development is generally a tripartite effort to maintain business, develop business, and create new business, with the goal of increasing people's income and well-being. Therefore, in order to achieve the desired economic growth through the rural public library, the concept of the library as a source of information for the community should be recognized. Processes and the added value of their services should be introduced to the public and certain groups of people in order for the authorities to improve the efficiency of the public library's role in the process of economic growth. Rural public libraries are the cultural and social exchanges centers of the rural areas and include 25 percent of Iranian public libraries. On the other hand, one of the accepted social roles of rural public libraries is to help economic reconstruction. They meet community expectations by meeting the information needs of local business owners and job seekers and local development. Therefore, this paper will present the role of Iranian rural public libraries in the development of the rural economy

to provide a practical model for librarians and policymakers of rural public libraries. This paper also will discuss the ongoing services of Iranian rural public libraries for small businesses. Finally, it will conclude and give suggestions.
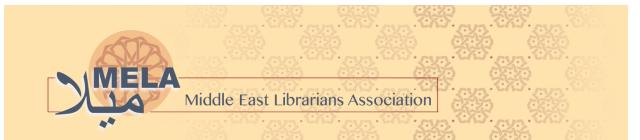
DAY 2 - 26 October (Tuesday)

MELA Endangered Libraries and Archives Committee (ELAC) roundtable: *Collaborations and Partnerships for Endangered Archives and Libraries: Case Studies from the Past, Present, and Future*
Collaboration is often central in projects around access, preservation, and description of endangered archives and libraries. In this panel, the Endangered Libraries and Archives Committee (ELAC) asks partners in such projects to introduce their work and to speak about what they have learned or hope to achieve. Themes include the instability often inherent to the processing and (post)custodianship of endangered archives; accessibility; how successful partnerships are formed and maintained; the differences between partnering with major international organizations versus collaborations between smaller organizations; how projects get off the ground once partnerships are made; and navigating the historical and structural complexities of working across national, linguistic, and cultural borders. This panel is envisioned as lasting 90 minutes and including brief presentations from the panelists followed by an open discussion moderated by members of ELAC.

The Bosnian Manuscript Ingathering Project: Resurrecting Copies of Burned Manuscripts / András Riedlmayer, Emeritus Aga Khan Librarian for Islamic Architecture, Harvard University

Just as the Cold War came to an unexpectedly peaceful end in 1991, a series of wars engulfed the former Yugoslavia. The Balkan wars of the 1990s resulted in the deaths of 150,000 people and the forced dislocation of millions more, singled out for persecution because of their ethnic and religious identities. The war against human beings was accompanied by the systematic destruction of the cultural record associated with the targeted communities -- libraries, archives and other cultural heritage. Among the first cultural casualties was the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo, bombarded with incendiary shells by the Bosnian Serb Army and burned on May 17-18, 1992. Almost all of the Oriental Institute's collection of 5,263 Islamic manuscript codices, and over 200,000 Ottoman archival documents, perished in the flames. In response, a small group of scholars and librarians in North America founded the Bosnian Manuscript Ingathering Project. Its goal: to gather pre-war photocopies and microfilms of manuscripts that had been destroyed, to scan these copies and to donate digital images of these items from the lost collection to our

colleagues in Bosnia. For locating and collecting copies, we wanted to make optimal use of the World Wide Web, then still in its infancy, and of the scanning and database technology of that era. In this talk, I will briefly present some of the successes of this pioneering Project, as well as the many pitfalls and frustrations we encountered, many of which still hold lessons for today.

The Palestine Land Studies Center: Activating an Archive and Preserving History / Dr. Howayda Al-Harithy, Director, & Michael Avanzato, Research Coordinator, Palestine Land Studies Center

Palestine suffers not only assaults on its physical land and people, but also its history. To this end, the Palestine Land Studies Center (PLSC) was founded at the American University of Beirut (AUB). Relying on the extensive archives of Dr. Salman Abu Sitta, the renowned Palestinian historian and geographer who generously donated his material to the center, the PLSC is dedicated to the preservation, reclamation, and dissemination of Palestinian history. Dr. Abu Sitta, and the Palestine Land Society in London which he founded, have provided a vast array of materials to the PLSC, included hundreds of maps and documents from the British Mandate period, thousands of books on Palestine from as early as the 19th century, and a wealth of digital maps, tables, and photos. It is the intention to use these resources to their full effect, and establish the PLSC as a global research hub, dedicated to not only the preservation of Palestinian history, but the advancement of the Right of Return of Palestinian refugees across the globe. This archive and the PLSC represent a unique opportunity to build upon this collection and to activate it. In order to affect the academic and public discourses at AUB and beyond, the PLSC will not only make the archives available to researchers and the public at AUB, but produce innovative teaching curriculums, and create a network of scholars, academics, and professionals, dedicated to the Palestinian cause.

The Hill Museum and Manuscript Library: Partnerships for Manuscript Digitization and Cultural Preservation / Josh Mugler, Curator of Islamic Manuscripts; Walid Mourad, Field Director for the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia; & Catherine Walsh, Director of Cataloging, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library

The Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (HMML), based at St. John's University in Minnesota, partners with libraries around the world for manuscript digitization. Prioritizing manuscript collections that are threatened by conflict and other dangers, HMML provides equipment and training, then pays manuscript holders for their work to photograph their collections. These digital photographs remain as backup copies in case the manuscripts are damaged in any way. The images are then made available for

online viewing at no cost to scholars and other interested people anywhere in the world, while the owners of the manuscripts retain the rights to control reproduction and publication of their images. HMML began to digitize manuscripts from Middle Eastern libraries in 2003, and the Middle Eastern collection now comprises tens of thousands of manuscripts from over 100 repositories in numerous countries, including both Christian collections and Islamic collections. In this presentation, three HMML staff members will discuss the organization's partnerships with repositories throughout the region, along with the cataloging, research, and database construction that happens at HMML once the manuscript images arrive. These efforts allow HMML to both preserve the world's manuscript heritage and share it with as many people as possible.

PANEL #2: HIGHLIGHTING INACCESSIBLE MENA MATERIALS DURING A PANDEMIC

Finding new ways to open up and engage with India Office records on the Qatar Digital Library / Curstaidh Reid, Gulf History Cataloguer, British Library, Dr. Mariam Aboelezz, Translation Support Officer, British Library & Dr. David Woodbridge, Gulf History Cataloguer, British Library

The British Library has been working in partnership with the Qatar Foundation and Qatar National Library to create the Qatar Digital Library (QDL), a free, online, bilingual portal. The QDL contains images of material from British Library collections relating to the Gulf, including over 7,000 individual items from the India Office records. An important output of the programme is enhanced catalogue descriptions, which are translated into Arabic, providing access to the digitised material in both languages. Over the past year we have sought to find ways to enable closer engagement with the QDL's contents. A feature of the portal is its hyperlinking of certain terms that appear in catalogue descriptions to a glossary. Home working provided an opportunity to review and expand the list of glossary terms, providing definitions and historical context to assist understanding and interpretation of the records to an online audience. We also expanded the store of 'expert articles' on the portal, so facilitating a deeper engagement with the records and the history they document. In addition, we have sought to engage critically with the language and terminology found in the records. Inspired by work such as the 'Words Matter' glossary, a small project team formed to reflect on how we catalogue, looking at terms in English and Arabic, and developing a consistent approach to treating each term in the processes of cataloguing and translation. This work is ongoing. This paper will outline the progress we have made, the lessons we have learned, and next steps.

Reimagining Home: Armenian Memorial Books at the Library of Congress / Khatchig Mouradian, Armenian and Georgian Area Specialist, Library of Congress

The removal the Ottoman Empire's Armenian population during and after World War I severed the connection of survivors and their descendants from their ancestral homes. Scattered around the globe, Armenians strove to keep the memory of their hometowns and villages alive in the minds of subsequent generations. The literary genre of the hushamatean (memorial book) emerged as an enduring legacy of this effort. Hundreds of volumes dedicated to the history, demography, culture, customs, genealogy, trades, and crafts of Armenian-populated regions, towns, or villages have been published in the decades since, primarily in Armenian and English. Aintab (modern day Gaziantep, Turkey), for instance, boasts half a dozen published memory books (most significantly Kevork Sarafian's two-volume, two-thousand-page History of Aintab Armenians, published in 1953, and a 327-page English-language version by the same author, titled A Briefer History of Aintab, published in 1957. A third volume, edited by Yervant Babayan, came out in 1994) and the Armenian-language periodical Armenian Aintab, later renamed New Aintab, launched in 1960. Even tiny villages sometimes have entire volumes dedicated to them. Okhu, a village in the region of Palu, comprised of a mere 25 households pre-WWI, yet one of its villagers wrote a 181-page memory book about it. Relying on the extensive collection of Armenian memorial books preserved in the Near East Section of the Library of Congress' African and Middle Eastern Division, this presentation explores the history of these books and their importance for historical, genealogical, and geographic research. It also surveys and proposes creative approaches to presenting the contents of these publications to the public at large in a digital environment.

Creating the "Google for Ottoman Turkish": Wikilala / Harun Tuncer, PhD Lecturer, Istanbul University

A Google for Ottoman Turkish! WIKILALA, an online digital library project aiming to gather and digitize all the printed texts from the Ottoman Empire since the introduction of the printing press, has been shedding new light on the empire's far-reaching history and culture. Thousands of books, magazines, journals, newspapers, and various other documents in Ottoman Turkish have been digitized and made available for those having interest, in and out of the academia. Surely there is a great deal of knowledge waiting to be discovered in Ottoman Turkish embedded in those colossal pieces printed since the time of Ibrahim Müteferriqa, e.g., 1729. As part of our project, the documents are transferred into a digital library in a three-part process. In the first stage, the documents are scanned in high-resolution if they are obtained

as a physical copy, and then they are digitized. Lastly, the digitized documents are cataloged and uploaded to the system, where they are available to be analyzed, and for in-text research. Researchers can access the texts online (once they subscribe) without having to obtain physical copies from libraries. They can also search through the available documents easily and quickly using the system's search engine, which can be used with both Arabic and Latin letters thanks to the optical character recognition (OCR) technique applied.

MELA Committee on Cataloguing (ConC) programming

Workshop: *Subject Analysis* / Margaret W. Hughes, Metadata Librarian for Africana, Social Sciences & Humanities; Head, Classification Unit; Team Lead, Metadata Creation Unit, Stanford Library

To reinforce cataloging skills in describing the content of our materials, to enhance discoverability of our materials, and to enhance library catalog searching skills, this workshop will provide a look at the principles, best practices, and common mistakes when applying Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) and Library of Congress Genre/Form Terms (LCGFT) to our bibliographic records.

Panel: *Toward Access and Discovery*

Cataloging manuscripts in the IFLA-LRM model / Dr. Jean N. Druel, OP, the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies (IDEO), Cairo

Since 2018, and in the frame of the research project Adawāt funded by the EU, the Dominican Institute and the Arabic Manuscript Institute, both located in Cairo, have been cataloging more than 5,000 Arabic manuscripts in the database AlKindi, using the online application Diamond-ILS. These records are available online. This application, which has been developed since 2013 by René-Vincent du Grandlaunay, a member of the Dominican Institute, is natively implementing the FRBR model and the RDA data format. In this presentation, I will propose a reflection based on our experience of implementing this model and data format to the cataloging of Arabic manuscripts.

Wikidata and Libraries, a Potential Platform to Explore / Iman Dagher, Arabic & Islamic Studies Metadata Librarian, UCLA Library

In their attempt to explore linked data initiatives and to expand the visibility of their collections, many GLAM institutions from around the world have been involved with projects related to the use of Wikidata, the free, public, and open knowledge base. This presentation will introduce the basic features of

Wikidata and highlight some of the benefits it provides: curating structured and reusable data, supporting multilingualism, serving as a hub of identifiers, and providing potentials of using its data in research and scholarship. It will also highlight some of the challenges with its use from a librarian/metadata professional perspective.

ROUNDTABLE: *Cataloging Issues in OCLC*

Unicode in OCLC: what can go wrong? / Pavel Angelos, Metadata Librarian, Arabic Specialty at Princeton University Library

There is a good diversity of Unicode characters for romanization of Middle Eastern languages, while OCLC accepts a limited range of Unicode values for the creation of paired fields or the production of NACO records. We will discuss how this causes an overflow of duplicate records in OCLC and slows down NACO production. Possible solutions will be provided as well. This presentation will be followed by an open discussion based on the feedback accumulated via the form on the MELA ConC website.

DAY 3 – October 27 (Wednesday)

MELA DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP INTEREST GROUP (DSIG) ROUNDTABLE: *Digital Scholarship: Who's It For?*
The MELA Digital Scholarship Interest Group invites you to join a conversation about the intended participants in, and the audience for, digital scholarship in Southwest Asia and North Africa. This conversation will center the experiences and perspectives of people from or working in the Middle East, and will integrate the issue of contingent, project-based labor throughout. With particular attention to the intersection of workers in libraries and archives with the various barriers to digital scholarship in Middle East Studies and in the Middle East, this conversation will examine, and seek actionable recommendations addressing, the following questions: how are non-librarians/archivists currently involved in OCR/HTR, transcription, digitization of materials and other forms of data creation/curation? How can they be more deeply integrated moving forward? How does one--or, should one event consider to--enter the forays of paleography and codicology, and what resources are available? What models of public, participatory scholarship exist currently in the Middle East? How can future ones bring about   infrastructural equity? What would non-extractive digital scholarship of the Middle East look like––acknowledging that current approaches to both partnership and product would benefit from improvement? Following short presentations by invited participants, the audience will be engaged in discussion questions designed by the invitees, and then the conversation will be opened to the audience as a whole.
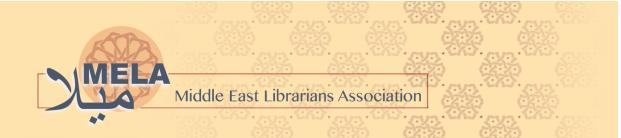
PANEL #3: SUSTAINABILITY, ACCESS, AND ADVOCACY: CURRENT MENA DH INITIATIVES

Making Arabic OCR Sustainable in the University Library Environment / Dale Correa, Middle East Librarian & History Coordinator, University of Texas at Austin

It is commonly known in Middle East library and scholarly circles that OCR for Arabic is at best a highly complex computer science undertaking, and at worst, woefully inaccurate. The state of Arabic OCR stems in part—if not entirely—from the Anglocentric nature of computing at large, which also results in the remarkably high financial and time cost of related endeavors. In the context of the North American research university and its libraries, where funding for collections and academic programs from and about the Middle East is far from universally robust, Arabic OCR is a dream made possible by generous external funding. However, the realization of this dream has proven itself temporary (external funding runs out with no local plan for sustainability), largely inaccessible (even the results of supposedly open-source projects prove murky to decipher or reuse), and disappointingly incomplete (the software works well for certain formats like crisply clean contemporary printed monographs, but not for others like serial publications). This paper describes the process of developing and enacting a sustainable internal workflow for the digitization and OCR of Arabic serials at a North American university research library, using an existing subscription to the software docWorks and limited external funding for student labor. It will address how such a complex undertaking could be broken up into manageable pieces that fit into existing and normal staff time expectations. This paper will also examine the results of the first phase of the project to OCR the early 20th century Egyptian journal, *Jaridat al-Balagh*, and how spending library staff time on something seemingly esoteric and specific like Arabic OCR has benefitted projects in more popular areas (like American Studies) as well as staff workflows across the organization. In short, this presentation seeks to demonstrate that Arabic OCR should not be limited to multi-million-dollar limited term grant projects; rather, it is feasible to integrate into the fraught university research library context, and, moreover, is a rewarding undertaking with benefits well beyond the scholarly applications of OCR.

Bridging the Digital Divide: Working with Transliterated Proper Names in Cultural Collections / David Wrisley, Associate Professor of Digital Humanities, NYU Abu Dhabi & Almazhan Kapan, NYU Shanghai and Intern at the OpenGulf Research Group

The proliferation of platforms for human- and machine-created transcriptions of digitized cultural collections in recent years--combined with the rush to such platforms in time of pandemic--resulted in unprecedented amounts of textual data. This situation presents a dilemma for digital scholarship: we want

to use automated text analysis models; however, these models remain riddled with cultural bias. In effect, some computational means of working with cultural collections cannot accurately account for the very people featured in those collections. Initiatives exist which begin to tackle the inequity within the field of digital textual analysis. The problem of inequality exists even within English-language corpora stemming from non-metropolitan Englishes. Our paper reports on a faculty-student collaborative work attempting to close this gap for collections in English but containing transliterated names coming from Arabic-speaking or adjacent Muslim cultures. Current state-of-the-art NER systems (e.g. NLTK) are trained only on English language corpora and, thus, do not accurately identify non-English entities and labels. We have built a custom NER model with spaCy 3.0 trained on Lorimer's Gazetteer, an early 20th century gazetteer about the Gulf region. Our system allows identifying named entities with Arabic linguistic origin and is evaluated using cultural collections written in English but referencing non-metropolitan Anglophone cultures such as the Bushire letters from the QDL and the Naff Arab American Oral History Interviews.

Recognizing Ottoman Turkish Print with Müteferriqa: A First Step in Digital Humanities / C. Ozan Ceyhan, Senior Ottoman Specialist, Miletos R&D Inc.

In 1726, Ibrahim Müteferrika pointed out that printed books contain search tools, such as tables of contents and indexes that enable readers to access information directly. His point remains significant as ever. Without proper tools, readers will have to skim through piles of documents, albeit living in the digital age. Thanks to the efforts of many archivists and librarians, extensive archives of printed Ottoman documents are now digitally stored and available online since the mid-2000s. Digitization increases the level of access for readers. However, without a way of full-text searching, digitized materials are akin to modern manuscripts. Current methods of digital queries rely on metadata, which may introduce unintended biases. Full-text search is the first step to a longer journey into more advanced digital techniques. First, text recognition converts digital images of texts to digital texts. Once the text is recognized, further inquiries become possible. One can search for a single word or a phrase. One step further is to include wild cards or fuzzy searches, which would be significant for any language and alphabet pair, perhaps more so for Turkish/Ottoman Turkish. Wild cards help with the agglutinative structure of Turkish. Foreign words with many different transcriptions in Ottoman Turkish and the changing orthography benefit from the fuzzy search. One can go beyond recognition to contextualize the text, identify the titles, subtitles, captions, etc., to produce an enriched digital version of the original. This paper will discuss the Müteferriqa project, text recognition, and full-text search engine for Ottoman Turkish.

DAY 5 – October 29 (Friday)

MELA METRICS WORKING GROUP REPORT / Mohamed Hamed, Middle Eastern and North African Studies, and Near Eastern Studies Librarian, UC Berkeley

The MELA Metrics Working Group is inviting all MELA members to attend and learn about the progress in developing the MELA Statistical database. The presentation will include showing the database, and a discussion about collecting the data from member libraries. MELA Statistical Database provides data about the counts of and the expenditures on materials in Middle Eastern languages in North American academic libraries. This includes materials in all formats such as books, serials and print or digital media . The data reflects the counts of materials written in Middle Eastern languages such as, but not limited to, Arabic, Armenian, Hebrew, Persian, Kurdish and Turkish. In addition, the database provides restricted access to OCLC data for the counts of materials in Middle Eastern languages that are held in North America. The database helps the Middle East research community and librarians to understand the extent of the collections that support the study of the Middle East through data about materials that are available to researchers in North America.

SPEAKERS BIOGRAPHIES

Mariam Aboelezz (PhD) is a Translation Support Officer at the British Library/Qatar Foundation Partnership Programme. She is also a Lecturer in Translation at University College London. She holds a PhD in Linguistics and MA in Language Studies from Lancaster University, and she is a Chartered Linguist with a Diploma in Translation (DipTrans) from the Chartered Institute of Linguists. Her research mainly relates to language politics and language ideologies in the Arab World.

Pavel Angelos currently works as Metadata Librarian, Arabic Specialty at Princeton University Library. He received his Ph.D. in Middle Eastern Studies from the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts in St. Petersburg, Russian Academy of Sciences. He specializes in Arabic manuscripts, Arabic classical literature (maqamat), systems optimization and automation, and business analysis.

Michael Avanzato is the Research Coordinator at AUB's Palestine Land Studies Center. His work is focused on the intersection of land tenure law and British imperialism in mandatory Palestine.

Howayda Al-Harithy (PhD) is the founding director of the Palestine Land Studies Center, and Professor of Architecture and Urban Design at the Department of Architecture and Design (ArD) at the American University of Beirut (AUB). Her current research conceptualizes urban recovery in relation to processes of historical editing, urban trauma, and protracted displacement.

Reneta Din is the project manager for the Knowledge Production Project. She holds an M.A. in Arab Studies from Georgetown University and a B.A. in Arabic from SUNY Binghamton. Reneta lives in the Washington, DC area with her family.

C. Ozan Ceyhan received his BSc and MA degrees from Istanbul Technical University. He is currently pursuing his PhD at the Istanbul University on the Reception of Darwin in Turkey from Ottoman to early Republican Period. He is also a Member of the Administrative Board of the Turkish Society for the History of Science. Ozan has been working at Miletos since 2016 as its Senior Ottoman Specialist. He also serves as the Product Manager for the Müteferriqa Project.

Dale C. Correa (PhD) is currently the Middle East Librarian and History Coordinator at the University of Texas at Austin.

Iman Dagher has been the Arabic and Islamic Studies Catalog Librarian at the University of California, Los Angeles, since June 2008. She received a Master's degree in Library and Information Studies from Loughborough University

of Technology in England, and a Master's degree in Library Science (Digital librarianship) from Wayne State University in Michigan. She has been the Arabic NACO Funnel co-coordinator since 2013. Her research interests include authority control, identity management, and cataloging non-Latin materials.

Jean Druel (PhD) is a French Dominican friar specialized in the history of Arabic grammar. He has been living in Cairo for twenty years. Trained as a teacher of Arabic (AUC, 2006) he did his PhD in Arabic grammar with Kees Versteegh (Nijmegen, 2012). After serving as director of the Dominican Institute in Cairo (2014-2020), he is currently editing a rare manuscript of Sībawayh's *Kitāb* that contains three different recensions.

Margaret W. Hughes is the Metadata Librarian for Africana, Social Sciences & Humanities and the Head, Classification Unit; Team Lead, Metadata Creation Unit, Stanford Library. As such, she is responsible for creating discovery metadata for Africana monographs and, more broadly, monographs in all Western European languages. She joined Stanford Libraries in 2001, became Head of the Classification Unit within the Metadata Services Department In February 2016, and a Team Lead (Middle East, South Asian, Africana & Hebrew resources) within the Metadata Creation Unit in July 2021.

Almazhan Kapan is a computer science student at NYU Shanghai with research interests in Digital Humanities and application of Natural Language Processing and Machine Learning in the analysis of historical materials. She was a summer 2021 intern at the OpenGulf research group and is currently a Software Engineering intern.

Walid Mourad joined HMML in 2004 as the Director of Field Operations for the Middle East. He was named to his current position in 2020. Prior to joining HMML, Mourad worked with the Center for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (CPART) program at Brigham Young University, Provo, UT, from 1999 to 2003, managing projects in his native Lebanon. He holds a BS in Computer Science and MS in Computer Science-Information Systems from Notre Dame University, Beirut. Walid oversees local field operations in the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, where he is responsible for local partner digitization training, along with managing the various field operations digitization projects. In addition, he assists HMML's Executive Director in establishing partnerships with religious leaders, academic institutions, and private organizations. A Maronite Christian, Mourad has forged relationships with both Christian and Muslim communities in several countries.

Khatchig Mouradian (PhD) is the Armenian and Georgian Area Specialist (African and Middle Eastern Division) at the Library of Congress, and a lecturer at Columbia University. He is the author of *The Resistance Network: The Armenian Genocide and Humanitarianism in Ottoman Syria, 1915-1918*. He has published articles on concentration camps, unarmed resistance, the aftermath of mass violence, midwifery in the Middle East, and approaches to teaching history. He is the co-editor of a forthcoming book on late-Ottoman history, and the editor of the peer-reviewed journal *The Armenian Review*. Khatchig has taught courses on imperialism, mass violence, urban space and conflict in the Middle East, the aftermaths of war and mass violence, and human rights at Worcester State University, Clark University, Stockton University, Rutgers University, and California State University at Fresno.

Joshua Mugler (PhD) joined HMML in 2018 as the Associate Cataloger for Arabic and Syriac manuscripts. In 2020 he was promoted to his current position of Curator of Islamic Manuscripts. In 2019, he earned his PhD in Theological and Religious Studies from Georgetown University, Washington, D.C. At HMML, Mugler catalogs Islamic manuscripts and leads a team of catalogers assigned to the Islamic manuscripts collection. They work collaboratively with the entire cataloging team, especially those members focused on Eastern Christian manuscripts whose collections often fall within the same geographic area.

Curstaidh Reid is a Gulf History Cataloguer at the British Library/Qatar Foundation Partnership Programme, producing catalogue descriptions of India Office Records material for the Qatar Digital Library. Active in the heritage sector since 2015, she graduated with an MSc in Information Management and Preservation from the University of Glasgow in 2018. She has held cataloguing and project archivist roles at a variety of institutions, including university, local authority and private archives. Her interests include international/bilingual archives, community-based archives, and conscientious description.

From 1985 until his recent retirement, **András Riedlmayer** directed the Documentation Center of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at Harvard's Fine Arts Library, supporting teaching and research on the history of the visual cultures of Islamic societies. Over the past 30 years, he has also documented and studied the destruction of manuscript libraries and other cultural heritage during the Balkan wars of the 1990s. He has testified about his findings as an expert witness before the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague and at the International Court of Justice.

Jessica Rose-Holland is the Manager of Knowledge Production and Pedagogy at the Forum on Arab and Muslim Affairs, part of the Arab Studies Institute. Jessica holds an MA in Middle Eastern Studies and Arabic from SOAS and a BA in History of Art from the University of Cambridge.

Leili Seifi (PhD) is currently an Associate Professor at the University of Birjand. She gained an Erasmus Mundus Post-Doctoral scholarship in 2013 at the University of Warsaw. She has done her Ph.D. at the University of Mysore in India. She was the Director of the University Library for more than two years. She has supervised dissertations in the field of public libraries and cultural heritage and has also taught more than 50 information literacy workshops. She has published several international and national papers in the field of digital preservation and public libraries. She has won the ASIS & T Infosher 2021 award.

Harun Tuncer (PhD) studied English Language and Literature at the University of Istanbul and earned his MA working on James William Redhouse. He completed his PhD in the history of British missionary activities in 2019. Harun is interested in the Turco-British relations in the 19th century. He worked for Çamlıca Basım Yayın for more than a decade (2007/2019), for Rumuz Yayınları as editor/translator between 2019 and 2020 and has lectured at İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi for the last two terms.

Catherine Walsh (PhD) is the Director of Cataloging at the Hill Museum & Manuscript Library (HMML). Prior to joining HMML, Walsh worked as a librarian, archivist, and cataloger for the Ruth Lilly Special Collections and Archives and the Center for Ray Bradbury Studies in Indianapolis. She has a BA in Art History and English from Indiana University, an MLIS from Indiana University, Indianapolis, and a MA in Art History from the University of Delaware, Newark. She holds a PhD in Art History from the University of Delaware in 19th-century American art.

Joan Weeks is Head of the Near East Section and Turkish Specialist in the African and Middle Eastern Division (AMED) at the Library of Congress. She supervises librarians, technicians, and administrative staff. Prior to 2015, she was a Sr. Instruction Librarian in the Instructional Programs Division. She holds an MA in International Studies with a Middle East and Turkic specialization from American University, an MA in Education from Marshall University, and an MLIS from Catholic University. She has strong background in staff instruction both in her current position and as a former staff instructor at the Library of Congress.

Keith Weimer has worked at the University of Virginia since 2007, serving in his current liaison role since 2015. The liaison for History and Religious Studies encompasses departments with significant Middle Eastern research interests. Before coming to the University of Virginia, Keith worked at The University of Richmond and Virginia Union University. He holds an M.A. in History and a Master's in Library and Information Science from the University of Pittsburgh. Keith served as President of the Virginia Library Association from 2016-2017.

David Woodbridge (PhD) is a Gulf History Cataloguer at the British Library/Qatar Foundation Partnership Programme. He holds a PhD in History from the University of Manchester, and his research focuses on the history of British imperialism in Asia.

David Joseph Wrisley (PhD) is Associate Professor of Digital Humanities at NYU Abu Dhabi. His research interests include comparative approaches to medieval literature in European languages and Arabic, digital spatial approaches to corpora, neural methods for handwritten text recognition across writing systems and open knowledge community building in the Middle East where he has lived and researched since 2002.