

The Middle East Librarians Association 2023 Conference Program

***Relationships, Responsibility,
and Care in Middle East
Librarianship***

**October 31st to November 2nd,
Thomson House, McGill University**





The MELA 2023 conference will be held in hybrid form from Tuesday October 31st to Thursday November 2nd at the Thomson House on McGill University campus. All sessions are scheduled daily between 8:30 a.m. – 5:45 p.m. EDT. Please note specific times for each session may differ slightly.

FOR ONLINE ATTENDEES:

- Zoom links will be shared ahead of the conference date
- If you intend on attending the Business Meeting, you will need to pay your dues to receive a Zoom link

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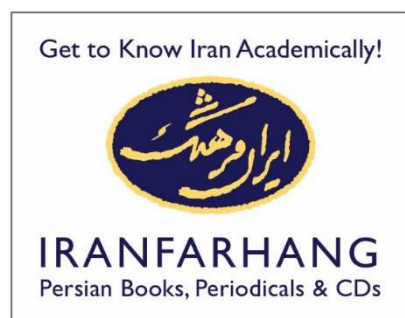
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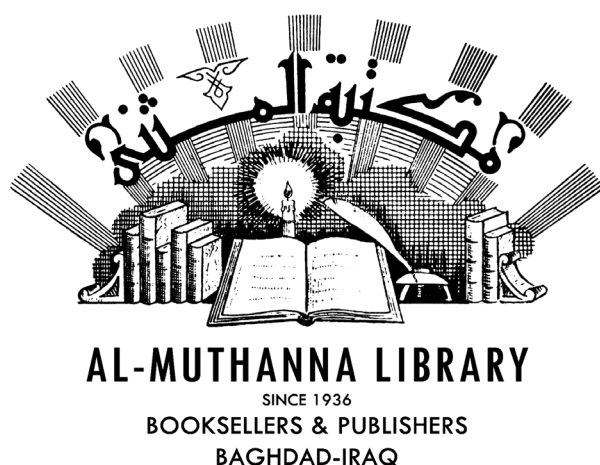
CONTACT US

MELA programming Committee members:

- [Iman Dagher](#), University of California, Los Angeles
- [Heather Hughes](#), University of Pennsylvania
- [William Kopycki](#), Library of Congress
- [Ryan Zohar](#), Georgetown University

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CONFERENCE THEME

Relationships, Responsibility, and Care in Middle East Librarianship

This year, MELA is inviting proposals in the form of panels, papers, or roundtable discussions that center **relationships**, **responsibility**, and **care** in Middle East Studies Librarianship and library and information science (LIS) work.

Critical librarianship and information studies has grown as a field and increasingly become an integrated part of the LIS landscape. While area studies librarianship has not necessarily been the focus or driver of these conversations, discussions around decolonizing libraries have necessarily brought area studies librarianship more into focus. The scholarship and activities around decolonization in libraries has ranged from diversifying collections, rethinking and refining descriptive practices, and examining the origins and ethics of legacy collections and current collecting practices. The question remains, however, whether these attempts conflate diversification with decolonization, failing to grapple with the very material aspects of decolonization. Conversations around cultural heritage, including manuscripts, have examined ethics around collecting, access, and ownership, more recent scholarship has taken a more holistic look at the profession.

As area studies librarianship reckons with extractive collective practices and discussions around decolonization, there are opportunities to reflect on better practices in collecting, description, digital projects, and outreach that focus on people and communities, and resource sharing. While discussions as to what constitutes decolonization in libraries and academia at large are still ongoing,¹ ethics of care can provide helpful frameworks for Middle East LIS workers to approach their work.

¹ Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1:1 (2012): 1-40, <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18630>.



Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor in their article “From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives”² suggest addressing social justice concerns “from one based on individual rights to a model based on a feminist ethics of care. From the approach of a feminist ethics of care, archivists are seen as caregivers, bound to records creators, subjects, users, and communities through a web of mutual affective responsibility.” With this framework in mind, we are asking for proposals in the form of panels, papers, or roundtable discussions that center **relationships, responsibility, and care** in Middle East Studies Librarianship and LIS work. We also would like to expand this framework to extend to co-workers, as workers themselves are often forgotten as community members. We explore these themes with regards to collections, description, digital projects, user and community partnerships, as well as labor and solidarity. We also welcome work that might address the limits of care as a radical, transformative practice. We also encourage proposals that engage with scholarly conversations *beyond* area studies and *across* other archival and library science methodologies for inspiration in shaping the future of our field.

² Michelle Caswell and Marika Cifor, “From Human Rights to Feminist Ethics: Radical Empathy in the Archives,” *Archivaria* 81 (2016): 23-43, <https://archivaria.ca/index.php/archivaria/article/view/13557>.



SUMMARY OF SESSIONS

DAY 1 - 31 October (Tuesday)

- 9:00 a.m. – 9:20 a.m. EDT: MELA Conference Opening, Introduction of George N. Atiyeh Prize Winner
- 9:20 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. EDT: BREAK
- 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 p.m. EDT: PANEL #1: Navigating Ethics and Repair in Manuscript Cataloging
- 10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. EDT: BREAK
- 10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EDT: PANEL #2: Collaboration, Cataloging, and Acquisitions Challenges
- 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. EDT: LUNCH
- 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS REPORTS
- 2:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. EDT: BREAK
- 2:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. EDT: PANEL #3: MELA [ENDANGERED LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES COMMITTEE \(ELAC\)](#) PANEL: Preserving Community Heritage: Hopes, Progress, and Challenges
- 3:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. EDT: BREAK
- 3:45 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. EDT: PANEL #4: Collecting Minority Community Publications at the Library of Congress
- 4:45 p.m. – 5:45 p.m. EDT: PANEL #5: Romanization and Responsibility

DAY 2 - 1 November (Wednesday)

- 8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. EDT: PANEL #6: Cultural Imperialism in Knowledge Production, Classification and Preservation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region
- 9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. EDT: BREAK
- 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. EDT: MELA [EDUCATION COMMITTEE](#) ROUNDTABLE: Reframing and Expanding Professional Responsibility: Exploring the Political Dimensions of Middle East Librarianship
- 11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. EDT: BREAK
- 11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. EDT: PANEL #7: Collections, Care, & Less-Told Stories
- 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. EDT: LUNCH
- 1:30 p.m. – 2:40 p.m. EDT: MELA [DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP INTEREST GROUP \(DSIG\)](#) ROUNDTABLE



- 2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. EDT: BREAK
- 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. EDT: MELA BUSINESS MEETING
- 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. EDT: COMMITTEE MEETINGS

DAY 3 - 2 November (Thursday)

- 8:30 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. EDT: SPONSORED BREAKFAST
- 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. EDT: VENDOR SHOWCASE PART 1
- 11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. EDT: BREAK
- 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. EDT: VENDOR SHOWCASE PART 2

DETAILED PROGRAM

DAY 1 - 31 October (Tuesday)

- 9:00 a.m. – 9:20 a.m. EDT: MELA Conference Opening by MELA President Mohamed Hamed and Past President, Atiyeh Chair, and Host Anaïs Salamon, Introduction of George N. Atiyeh Prize Winner Mitra Fakhrashrafi

- 9:20 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. EDT: BREAK

- 9:30 a.m. – 10:30 p.m. EDT: **PANEL #1: Navigating Ethics and Repair in Manuscript Cataloging**

Moderator: Cyrus F. Zarganj, Special Formats Catalog Librarian and Associate Professor, Libraries of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA

- Evyn Kropf, Librarian for Middle Eastern & North African Studies and Religious Studies and Curator of Islamic Manuscripts, University of Michigan Library, USA
- Jake Benson, Researcher, Persian Manuscripts, John Rylands Research Institute and Library, University of Manchester, UK
- Aicha Azzaoui, Metadata Coordinator, Northwestern University Library, USA

- 10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. EDT: BREAK

- 10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EDT: **PANEL #2: Collaboration, Cataloging, and Acquisitions Challenges**

Moderator: Mohamed Hamed, Middle Eastern and Near Eastern Studies Librarian, University of California, Berkeley Library, USA

- *Collaborations at AUC* / Mark Muehlhaeusler, Center of Excellence for the Middle East and Arab Cultures at American University of Cairo Libraries, Egypt; Rafik Yacoub, Department of Computer Science, American University of Cairo, Egypt; Omar Salem, Department of Computer Science, American University of Cairo, Egypt
- *Reimagine Descriptive Workflows: a vision for inclusive descriptive practices* /



Merrilee Proffitt, Senior Manager, OCLC Research Library Partnership, USA; Jay Holloway, Director of End User Platform Services, Global Product Management, OCLC, USA

- *Barriers to Access of Middle East Materials /* Ismaeil Hakimi, Middle East Collection Liaison, University of Utah, USA
- *Access Points in the Library Catalog, a Key to Discovery: Eyes on NACO and SACO Programs /* Iman Dagher, Arabic and Islamic Studies Metadata Librarian, University of California, Los Angeles, USA; Denise Soufi, Metadata Librarian for Middle Eastern Languages, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA

- 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. EDT: LUNCH

- 1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. EDT: LIBRARY OF CONGRESS REPORTS

- Rustin Zarkar, Field Director, Library of Congress Cairo Overseas Office, Egypt
- Fehl Cannon, Field Director, Library of Congress New Delhi Overseas Office, India
- Joan Weeks, Head, Near East Section and Turkic World Area Specialist, African and Middle Eastern Division, Near East Section, Library of Congress, USA
- Hong Ta-Moore, Head, Middle East and South Asian Acquisitions and Cataloging Section, Library of Congress

- 2:00 p.m. – 2:15 p.m. EDT: BREAK

- 2:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. EDT: **PANEL #3: MELA [ENDANGERED LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES COMMITTEE \(ELAC\)](#): Preserving Community Heritage: Hopes, Progress, and Challenges**

Moderators: Sean Swanick, Librarian for Middle East, North Africa, and Islamic Studies, Duke University Libraries, USA; Iman Dagher, Arabic and Islamic Studies Metadata Librarian, University of California, Los Angeles, USA

- *Community-Based Heritage Preservation: Lessons for the Future* / Stephennie Mulder, Associate Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture, University of Texas at Austin, USA
 - *Sinai Manuscripts Digital Library, St. Catherine's Monastery, Mt. Sinai (UCLA)* / Dawn Childress, UCLA Director of the Sinai Manuscripts Digital Library and Librarian for Digital Collections and Scholarship, UCLA's Digital Library Program, USA
 - *The Modern Endangered Archives Program (MEAP-UCLA)* / Rachel Deblinger, Director of the Modern Endangered Archives Program (MEAP), UCLA Library, USA
 - *Preserving the Past Together: Collaborative Strategies for protecting Endangered Archives (EAP) AUB* / Samar El Mikati El Kaissi, Associate University Librarian for Archives & Special Collections, American University of Beirut Libraries, Lebanon; Elie Kahale, Director of Digital Initiatives and Scholarship, American University of Beirut Libraries, Lebanon
- 3:30 p.m. – 3:45 p.m. EDT: BREAK
- 3:45 p.m. – 4:45 p.m. EDT: **PANEL #4: Collecting Minority Community Publications at the Library of Congress**
 - Huda Dayton, Area Specialist (Arab World), Library of Congress, USA
 - Khatchig Mouradian, Area Specialist (Armenia/Georgia), Library of Congress, USA
 - Hiran Dinavari, Area Specialist (Iranian World), Library of Congress, USA
 - Muhannad Salhi, Area Specialist (Arab World), Library of Congress, USA
 - Joan Weeks, Head, Near East Section and Turkic World Area Specialist, African and Middle Eastern Division, Near East Section, Library of Congress, USA



- 4:45 p.m. – 5:45 p.m. EDT: **PANEL #5: Romanization and Responsibility**

Moderator: Sarah DeMott, Research Librarian, Harvard University, USA

- *Language Mediation: Looking at the Case Study Persian Works Cataloged in Arabic Script* / Masoud Ariankhoo, PhD candidate, Near East Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, USA
- *Technological Advances and Retroactive Additions* / Antara Bhattacharya, BA 2024, Computer Science and Linguistics, Harvard University, USA
- *Outreach and Instruction for Searching with Non-Roman Scripts* / Sarah DeMott, Research Librarian, Harvard University, USA
- *Transliteration Outside of Academic Librarianship* / David Hannan, PhD student, Near East Languages and Civilizations, Harvard University, USA

DAY 2 - 1 November (Wednesday)

- 8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m. EDT: **PANEL #6: Cultural Imperialism in Knowledge Production, Classification and Preservation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region**

Moderator: Anaïs Salamon, Head Librarian of the Islamic Studies Library, McGill University

- *Archival repatriation and placement in the Middle East and North Africa: the Vienna Convention for global archival decolonization* / Dr. J.J. Ghaddar, Assistant Professor, School of Information Management, Dalhousie University,
- *A Cold War History of Books and Knowledge Production in the Middle East: the case of the Franklin Book Programs* / Mahdi Ganjavi, PhD Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education, University of Toronto, Canada
- *Cultural Imperialism and Library of Congress Subject Headings on the Middle East* / Blair Kuntz, Near and Middle Eastern Studies Librarian, University of Toronto Libraries

- 9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. EDT: BREAK



- 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. EDT: MELA [EDUCATION COMMITTEE](#) ROUNDTABLE: Reframing and Expanding Professional Responsibility: Exploring the Political Dimensions of Middle East Librarianship

Moderator: Salma Abumeeiz, Research & Instruction Librarian, UCLA, USA

- Dale Correa, The Middle Eastern Studies Librarian & History Coordinator, University of Texas at Austin, USA
- Heather Hughes, Middle Eastern Studies Librarian, Penn Libraries, USA
- Evyn Kropf, Librarian for Middle Eastern & North African Studies and Religious Studies and Curator of Islamic Manuscripts, University of Michigan Library, USA
- Daniel Lowe, Curator, Arabic Collections, British Library, UK
- AJ Robinson, Subj. Librarian for Islamic Studies, South Asian Studies, & WGS Studies, Wash. U. in St. Louis, USA
- Amanda Hanoosh Steinberg, Librarian for Islamic Art & Architecture, Harvard Fine Arts Library, USA

- 11:00 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. EDT: BREAK

- 11:15 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. EDT: **PANEL #7: Collections, Care, & Less-Told Stories**

Moderator: Guy Burak, Librarian for Middle Eastern & Islamic Studies, NYU Libraries

- *The Sudan Memory Project for Digitizing Sudanese Historical Assets: An Analytical Study* / Dr. Mohammed A. Abdulla, Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University, KSA; Dr. Zakaria Adam Hassan, University of the East, Manila, Philippines
- *Syrian American Digital Public History Projects* / Lydia Harrington, Senior Curator, The Syria Museum, USA
- *Orientalia objects and orientalism: Reflections on public programming at the Textile Museum of Canada* / Mitra Fakhrashrafi, Senior Fellow, Muslims in Canada Archives and Library & Archival Sciences, MI candidate, University of Toronto, Canada



- *Records Under Lock and Key: Exploring the Disconnect Between Israelis and the Archives* / Laura Daly, FamilySearch and University of Alabama Alumna, USA
- *The Albert Nekimken Turkish Theater Collection: Censorship, Contentious Politics, and the Cold War Stage* / S. Berk Metin, Ph.D. Student, Simon Fraser University, Canada; Ryan Zohar, Middle East Studies Librarian, Georgetown University Library, USA
- 12:30 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. EDT: LUNCH
- 1:30 p.m. – 2:40 p.m. EDT: MELA [DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP INTEREST GROUP \(DSIG\)](#) ROUNDTABLE
Moderator: Gayle Fischer, Librarian for Islamic Law at Harvard Law School Library, USA
 - Mathew Barber, Centre for Digital Humanities, AKU-ISMC
 - Josh Mugler, Curator of Eastern Christian and Islamic Manuscripts, Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, USA
 - Guy Burak, Librarian for Middle Eastern, Islamic, Jewish and African Studies, NYU Libraries, USA
- 2:45 p.m. – 3:00 p.m. EDT: BREAK
- 3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m. EDT: MELA BUSINESS MEETING
- 4:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. EDT: COMMITTEE MEETINGS

DAY 3 - 2 November (Thursday)

- 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. EDT: VENDOR SHOWCASE PART 1
- 11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. EDT: BREAK
- 11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. EDT: VENDOR SHOWCASE PART 2



PRESENTATION ABSTRACTS

DAY 1 - 31 October (Tuesday)

PANEL #1: Navigating Ethics and Repair in Manuscript Cataloging

This panel aims to foster an engaging and conversational discussion surrounding the multifaceted challenges scholars, librarians, and archivists face in the responsible stewardship of manuscripts. This panel will explore the importance of addressing issues such as capacity and expertise constraints, mutual support and cooperation, meaningful engagement of student contributions, recognition and compensation for labor, transparency with direct acquisition and collecting histories, and engaging community perspectives.

Panel #2: Collaboration, Cataloging, and Acquisitions Challenges

Collaboration between the Department of Computer Science and the Library at AUC / Mark Muehlhaeusler, Center of Excellence for the Middle East and Arab Cultures at American University of Cairo Libraries, Egypt; Rafik Yacoub, Department of Computer Science, American University of Cairo, Egypt; Omar Salem, Department of Computer Science, American University of Cairo, Egypt

This presentation will showcase the collaboration between the Department of Computer Science and the Library at AUC. It will focus on two student-led projects which leverage digital technologies in order to create faster, and more in-depth access to Library collections. We will show how open source software tools can be used to speed up and refine the processes of accessioning, cataloging, and full-text scanning. At the same time, we will show how these tools create the potential for community engagement.



Reimagine Descriptive Workflows: a vision for inclusive descriptive practices / Merrilee Proffitt, Senior Manager, OCLC Research Library Partnership, USA; Jay Holloway, Director of End User Platform Services, Global Product Management, OCLC, USA

Reimagine Descriptive Workflows was an OCLC project to better understand and address harm caused by cultural institutions' metadata and collection description practices. In 2021-22, the project convened an international group of experts, practitioners, and community members to determine ways of improving descriptive practices, tools, infrastructure, and workflows in libraries and archives. A year and a half after the publication of our community agenda, *Reimagine Descriptive Workflows: A Community-informed Agenda for Reparative and Inclusive Descriptive Practice*, we take time to reflect on the report, how it has influenced the community, and how it has influenced OCLC.

Barriers to Access of Middle East Materials / Ismaeil Hakimi, Middle East Collection Liaison, University of Utah, USA

Acquiring materials from the Middle East may be challenging for a variety of reasons including, technological constraints, geographical, legal, political, financial and religious barriers, policy and regulatory impediments, and transportation, language and employment-related obstacles.

Lack of a distribution system with fast functionality and easy paying credit card is a technological obstacle. There is no Amazon in the Middle East to order books from as we can do it from Germany by Amazon. It would also be challenging to identify books with less information needed. For instance, it's possible that books published in Yemen don't have ISBN numbers, publication dates, locations, or even book prices. Lack of organized and on time shipment causes delay to receive a book package from the Middle East. Even the most convenient and speediest of book vendors that we work with take a very long time to ship books to us even for items that are in stock in their inventory.

Selectors, decades ago, could go to the Middle East and browse the books in the libraries. This way they could possibly face books for the first time and find some lovely



books while they even have not imagined them before. Nowadays, the selectors can only order the books announced on their websites or in the vendors' lists sent to them.

Access Points in the Library Catalog, a Key to Discovery: Eyes on NACO and SACO Programs / Iman Dagher, Arabic and Islamic Studies Metadata Librarian, University of California, Los Angeles, USA; Denise Soufi, Metadata Librarian for Middle Eastern Languages, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA

This presentation will highlight the current condition of the NACO programs available for MELA members, with specific emphasis on the Arabic NACO Funnel and the means to avoid duplication and to ensure proper use of Name Authority Records in bibliographic records. It will also address the SACO program and the opportunities available for MELA members to contribute to EDI principles in LC Subjects Headings, exemplified by a recent case study.

Panel #3: MELA [ENDANGERED LIBRARIES AND ARCHIVES COMMITTEE \(ELAC\)](#) PANEL: Preserving Community Heritage: Hopes, Progress, and Challenges

It is no secret at this point that cultural heritage materials and collections are at risk across the world due to a variety of factors, including but not limited to political, financial, technological, social, and environmental challenges. From political unrest and economic instability to natural deterioration of materials as climate change makes preservation ever more difficult, programs and initiatives around the world are working to put in place safeguards to ensure longevity, sustainability, and accessibility of collections. From the perspective of material collections in the Middle East and North Africa, multiple collections and projects are underway. In this panel, representatives from the following programs and initiatives explain their projects, the steps they take to ensure cultural heritage safeguarding, and their interactions with their communities, as well as available funding and support opportunities/programs.



PANEL #4: Collecting Minority Community Publications at the Library of Congress

Promoting diversity and inclusivity in libraries requires creating collections that represent minority groups. This panel will showcase Middle East and Central Asian minority community collections and the challenges for processing and digitizing them for discovery and access.

Huda Dayton will highlight the following minority groups in the Arab World, including their experiences, cultures, histories, and contributions.

- Arab women's literature and collections.
- Christian Arabs including the Coptic in Egypt, and the Assyrian in Iraq
- Berber culture and language in North Africa.

Khatchig Mouradian will explore the African and Middle Eastern Division's collections pertaining to, and in the languages of, religious and ethnic minorities in Armenia and Georgia, as well as the Armenian community in Turkey.

Hirad Dinavari will delve into a unique collection of books in lesser-known Iranic languages, with a spotlight on Zaza and Yazidi, spoken within the Kurdish region, and the minority East Iranian languages in the Pamir region and Ossetia. He will showcase the rich tapestry of content and linguistic diversity of materials within the Iranic languages.

Muhannad Salhi will discuss the collection of the Palestinian journalist and writer Muhammad 'Ali al-Tahir who played a major role in covering the various independence movements in a number of Arab countries in North Africa, as well as being an advocate for Palestinian rights and Arab Nationalism. His collection at LOC consists of pamphlets, correspondence with major Arab leaders, photographs, and newspaper articles.

Joan Weeks will focus on the minority Dungan, Tatar and Uighur peoples of Central Asia who retained their cultural identities, although writing in their languages using dominant Russian Cyrillic and Chinese characters. Challenges for processing and discovering the collections about their folklore, religion, history, and culture will be explored.

The panel will highlight the best strategies for a rich research experience both onsite and virtually.



PANEL #5: Romanization and Responsibility

Though the Romanization of non-Latin script language materials is an indispensable feature of most digital library catalogs, there are political dimensions involved in the use of script that may normalize language hegemonies in academia. This roundtable proposes to examine the politics of Romanization in library cataloging by a) analyzing the history of the practice outside of librarianship, b) probe the reasons why the practice of language mediation persists in cataloging by looking at the case study Persian works cataloged in Arabic script, c) consider the contemporary supply chain of cataloging using vernacular script and the precarity of area studies catalogers in academic libraries, and d) suggests technological advances that would make retroactively adding indigenous non-Roman scripts into catalogs possible. Further, in the face of limited resources, and the historical nature of many special collections which predate the catalogers' capacity to catalog in indigenous scripts, this discussion seeks to provide a space to explore the role of librarians in educating users about the implications of language hegemony and the histories of romanization. Harvard Library offered three student fellowships during the summer of 2023 to assist in developing an information literacy plan to orient researchers working in Middle East and Near East languages to best practices in transliteration protocol for catalog searches in Harvard Library's catalog, HOLLIS. The roundtable will be made up of the project team and aims to share our insights and conversations with the broader MELA community.



DAY 2 - 1 November (Wednesday)

PANEL #6: Cultural Imperialism in Knowledge Production, Classification and Preservation in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region

This panel concentrates on the notion of cultural imperialism in knowledge production, classification, and preservation in the MENA. As Edward Said maintained, “the power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them.” Mahdi Ganjavi explores knowledge production and cultural imperialism in the case of the Franklin Book Programs, a not-for-profit founded in 1952 that initially sought to promote U.S. liberal bourgeois values and create markets for U.S. books, but then evolved into one of the most significant international educational development programs in the Cold War era. Using a dialectical and historical materialist approach, Ganjavi shows how the production and distribution of a wide range of liberal texts in the region was a continuation of U.S. anti-communist policies at that time. Blair Kuntz shows the links between cultural imperialism and knowledge classification by demonstrating how Library of Congress Subject Headings (LCSH) promote a narrative which largely reflects the views of the government and State Department, and act as a hegemonic tool. The MENA has been the locus of considerable American and Western aggression, and LCSH depictions of the region have followed a pattern of obfuscation, silence, evasion, and denial to support the Western power to narrate. J.J. Ghaddar’s presentation describes resistance to the Western power to narrate in relation to knowledge preservation by examining questions of archival decolonization, repatriation and placement focused on the Algeria-France Dispute, and the many Palestinian and Iraqi cases of archival displacement over the last century. Excavating the decolonizing ethos and radical history of the Vienna Convention on Property, Archives & Debt (1983), Ghaddar uses these cases to explore the potential and limits of the Convention to resolve cases of disputed archives in colonial and neocolonial contexts.



MELA EDUCATION COMMITTEE ROUNDTABLE: Reframing and Expanding Professional Responsibility: Exploring the Political Dimensions of Middle East Librarianship

Middle East Studies librarianship is situated within the broader political landscapes in which our institutions, profession, and field(s) are produced and reconstituted. By facilitating discussion from colleagues across librarianship through the lens of the political environment of work, we complicate aspirations to neutrality in the context of institutions and librarianship. The panel seeks to question how MENA/SWANA librarianship is embedded in the social and political contexts within which we work. From institutional manuscript holdings, our responsibilities to the communities with connections to these works, research consultations on topics that are underrepresented in our collections and in the academic world, to how and from whom we receive funding, our jobs increasingly require us to make plain our structural entanglements. Acknowledging aspects of the political landscape in which we work, this panel works to bring increased understanding, engagement, and support for collective action. Further to these questions, how do we do this kind of work based on an ethics of care when our institutions, careers, and labor conditions are in conflict with our professional values? And what does it mean to do this work while engaging academic communities and publics alike alongside our increasing demand for ethical decision making and professional responsibility? This panel aims to invite the MELA community to consider ways that the political shows up in our work through lived experiences shared by a panel of our MELA colleagues.

PANEL #7: Collections, Care, & Less-Told Stories

The Sudan Memory Project for Digitizing Sudanese Historical Assets: An Analytical Study /
Dr. Mohammed A. Abdulla, Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University, KSA; Dr. Zakaria Adam Hassan, University of the East, Manila, Philippines

The Memory of Sudan project, funded in 2017 by the British Council and most recently by Aliph Foundation, the main objective of the project is scanning of audiovisual and other archive materials existing in a group of Sudanese cultural heritage institutions. King's College London is leading the Sudan Memory Project, with local partners including

the Sudanese Knowledge Archiving Society and the Sudan National Records Office. The scanning of the materials began at the Sudan Film Archive and was funded by the Norwegian Embassy in Khartoum and managed by the University of Bergen. then the project Sudan Memory continued, where in 3 years it was able to scan thousands of films. The Memory of Sudan project also scanned photographs, documents, manuscripts, newspapers, biological samples and artefacts from Sudan National Records Office, the University of Khartoum, the National Museum, the Al-Rasheed Photography Studio in Atbara and the Heritage House in Ibri. The digital collection currently contains more than 100,000 scanned images.

The "Memory of Sudan" project is the first project to digitize historical documents, and the project aims to collect and archive important Sudanese historical documents from damage and digitization to preserve them from poor storage and natural factors, and to preserve Sudanese history and culture from content, stories, archives, and documents in a scientific way, and in order to achieve this, modern technologies must be adopted in digitizing archival materials from various public and private collections. The project acquires special importance as a result of the natural conditions in Sudan of rain, floods and high temperatures with lack of proper storage, as well as neglect and conflicts that threaten the Sudanese heritage and culture, and the current study contributes to the study and analysis of the archive materials of the Memory of Sudan project such as films, photos, manuscripts, documents and artworks, "as well as stories, historical articles, memories, and historical documents of historical cities such as the city of Suakin, Marawi, ...etc", and highlighting the importance of preserving these archival materials from damage and loss and preserving them until Current and future generations can benefit from this valuable and important heritage.

In this study, the researchers will; examine what is the problem the Sudan Memory Project is trying to solve by preserving the Sudanese culture and identity? Why are the project actions to digitize needed? What are the benefits of digitizing the historical Sudanese Culture and Identity in terms of historical, social, scientific, educational and economic aspects? Are there any encountered obstacles and challenges unresolved? And what are the indicators of the success of the said project?

The descriptive analytical approach will be used to address the questions of the vision, vision and objectives of the Sudan Memory Project, the archival materials subjected to the project, the possibility of developing a mechanism for digitizing the historical collections, documents, and materials. In addition, the study would figure out what was the possibility of the availability of the historical materials and its verification of content, the progress of safe preservation of materials and its geographical location.

The findings describe a number of results and observations, that most important of which is raising awareness of the challenges faced by the Sudanese people and their cultural and civilizational heritage, with the need to coordinate efforts to digitize cultural heritage at all local levels, while creating and encouraging cooperation between all parties working in the field of documentation, digitization and heritage preservation, and the possibility of linking these efforts to create partnerships with Sudan National Archives and the Sudanese National Library, as the collection, maintenance and preservation of archival materials and their availability upon request has an influential role in preserving Pluralistic culture and values that work to preserve the unity of Sudan and Sudanese society from divisions and fractures.

Syrian American Digital Public History Projects / Lydia Harrington, Senior Curator, The Syria Museum, USA

Syrian American history has until the past decade received little attention in the realms of American Studies and Middle Eastern History. Currently it is blossoming with diverse works ranging from the study of Syrians who migrated to Southern California by way of Mexico (Gualtieri, 2019) and or homesteaded in the Dakotas (Curtis, 2022), changing conventional conceptions of migration patterns and regional homogeneity. Within this changing historiographical context, my colleague Chloe Bordewich and I founded our public history project, “Wandering Little Syria,” to draw attention to Boston’s central Syrian district that thrived between the 1890s and 1950s yet is largely absent from our city’s historiography. In addition to walking tours and physical exhibitions, we are developing an interactive digital map with a grant from Boston Public Library’s Leventhal Map and Education Center that allows users to see the changes over time in Little Syria – notably how Syrians were pushed out of what is now Chinatown into the South End as



the Boston Redevelopment Authority pursued policies of “urban development” that significantly and negatively impacted Syrian and Chinese Bostonians and is still fresh in the memory of these communities. Our research has involved building a data set based on building relationships with Syrian Americans and their institutions (such as churches) and interviewing community members. Another digital aspect of our project will be an event held alongside the next iteration of our physical exhibition, at UMass Boston, in which Syrian American community members will gather and share personal heirlooms which will be digitized by public history archivists and added to the university’s local history archive.

No doubt one reason that Syrian American history has drawn more attention recently is the Syrian Revolution and ongoing civil war. As the inaugural curator for The Syria Museum, a project of the nonprofit the Syrian American Council, I am building a virtual museum dedicated to the cultural heritage of Syria and the history of Syrians in the US. This work encompasses researching what we can digitally borrow and display from collections of Syrian materials while we develop a plan to build our own collection, collaborating with other institutions to bring attention to Syrian refugee issues, and curating a traveling exhibition to accompany SAC’s community events to publicize and fundraise for our museum. Some challenges that arise are defining the scope of “Syria” spatially and temporally, working within a policy and advocacy-focused non-profit environment, and negotiating with Syrian Americans on what they want the museum to focus on.

Orientalia objects and orientalism: Reflections on public programming at the Textile Museum of Canada / Mitra Fakhrashrafi, Senior Fellow, Muslims in Canada Archives and Library & Archival Sciences, MI candidate, University of Toronto, Canada

In the early 1900s, a group of T. Eaton Company buyers travelled from Toronto and Winnipeg to North Africa, the Middle East, and West Asia in search of antique and semi-antique rugs that would later join retail showrooms, private collections, and public museums across Canada. From the 1910s to the 1950s, these journeys were also common practice among small retailers and other department stores keen to advertise ‘adventurer’ and connoisseur imagery to promote sales of ‘orientalia’; the catch-all term



used by Europeans and Americans in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century to categorize objects primarily attributed to Islamic cultures. As 2021 Curator in Residence at the Textile Museum of Canada, I quickly became interested in connecting this movement of 'orientalia' to colonialism and imperialism on our walls and under our feet. Drawing from Ariella Aisha Azoulay, I considered the ways in which "It is not possible to decolonize the museum without decolonizing the world,"; connecting museum objects to the material conditions that determine the lives of its makers. While not all Museum collections are retrieved through plunder, my research explored the journey of a textile into a public museum and how this may tell us as much about its social history as the knotting, dyes, and patterns that characterize it. This residency culminated in the presentation of "And other monuments", a curated public exhibition and accompanying interactive digital workbook presented at the Textile Museum of Canada from September 2021 until January 2022.

Drawing from experiences curating public exhibitions and programs, this paper considers the limits and possibilities of utilizing arts-based approaches to critically engage collections with the communities that continue to face the brunt of violent colonial legacies in Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums (GLAM).

Records Under Lock and Key: Exploring the Disconnect Between Israelis and the Archives
/ Laura Daly, FamilySearch and University of Alabama Alumna, USA

In a recent webinar entitled, "Israel/Palestine: What do the archives reveal/conceal?" the former state archivist of Israel, Yaacov Lozowick, called attention to what he believes is a significant issue—a lack of awareness about Israel's archives and the policies that govern them among Israel's citizens. While so much focus has been placed on the injustice of stolen records and censorship by government officials, little attention has been paid to the way the general population is interacting with archives, understanding their potential uses, or even has an awareness of their existence. This disconnect likely stems from insufficient education and outreach programs in Israel, particularly those targeting diverse populations. It could also be the result of other issues, including a lack of diverse narratives and/or language barriers considering many of the state records are written in Hebrew. Calling attention to these underlying issues can help

to gather the support needed to effectuate positive change in Israel's state archives and generate ideas for overcoming such challenges. After considering these potential barriers, an analysis of successful community outreach programs can shed light on what archival institutions are doing to make connections with Israel's communities and what methods are being used to educate the public. One successful examples include a community archive whose school presentations, community workshops, and robust social media is helping to educate all generations about the importance of record keeping. By responding to the needs of diverse communities and developing more effective outreach programs, Israel's archival institutions can cultivate greater awareness and engagement with the archives and work towards a more wholistic representation of its citizens and history.

The Albert Nekimken Turkish Theater Collection: Censorship, Contentious Politics, and the Cold War Stage / S. Berk Metin, Ph.D. Student, Simon Fraser University, Canada; Ryan Zohar, Middle East Studies Librarian, Georgetown University Library, USA

Turkish political theater of the 1960s-1970s was a genre that galvanized both its intellectual proponents and the ire of state authorities. Deeply marked by the work of Bertolt Brecht produced some half a century earlier, the stage became an important setting where the broader violence between far-left groups, far-right groups, and the government was recast in literary form. Returning to Turkey for doctoral research on the subject of German Marxist influences on Turkish political theater, former U.S. Peace Corps volunteer Albert Nekimken collected plays, works of theatrical criticism, periodicals, short stories, novels, and rare recordings of performances, among other materials. The Albert Nekimken Turkish Theater Collection, largely composed of Nekimken's primary research materials, began taking a life of its own as playwrights, intellectuals, and others participated in interviews or gifted materials to the young scholar in the mid-to-late 1970s. While many of the monograph-length works are not unique to this collection, they were acquired by Nekimken at a time of rampant political censorship and intellectual persecution—exemplified by the fact that many of the publications and performances in the collection were banned or subject to great censorship by the Turkish government. Among the blacklisted books are works by well-known writers such as Çetin Altan, Fakir Baykurt, Orhan Kemal, Rıfat Ilgaz, Yaşar Kemal, Sabahattin Ali, and Aziz Nesin. This newly



described and processed collection held in the Booth Family Center for Special Collections at Georgetown University offers new directions to students and scholars of political theatre, the history of Modern Turkey, Turkish-German literary exchanges, and intellectual histories of the Cold War. The collection also gives educators hoping to bring primary sources into the classroom new pedagogical tools to explore histories of censorship, erasure, and contentious politics.

MELA [DIGITAL SCHOLARSHIP INTEREST GROUP \(DSIG\)](#) ROUNDTABLE

This DSIG steering committee-sponsored roundtable brings together panelists from a variety of backgrounds, including librarianship, digital scholarship, and computer science, in order to discuss recent advances in OCR/HTR for Arabic-script and the collaborative opportunities between our professions.

As work on OCR and HTR for Arabic-script printed texts and manuscripts continues to develop, soon we are likely to see the transcription of texts at scale. Within existing institutional workflows and systems (along with those to be developed), how might librarians and library workers contribute to OCR/HTR development efforts and benefit from transcribed texts? What role can librarians and library workers play in the updating and retraining of OCR/HTR models, such as through user-contributed corrected transcription or the collective retraining of models across institutional repositories? In a world where machine learning-driven approaches are growing, how can automated approaches to metadata production enrich existing library catalogs, rather than replace them? What is required to allow both human and computational judgment to co-exist in library metadata production? For example, what role could librarian expertise play in minimizing biases generated from Machine Learning and Large Language Models that are based largely on Latin-script, European languages?

SPEAKERS BIOGRAPHIES

Mohammed A. Abdulla has held a number of key positions including being the Manager of the Professional Development Center, Manager of the Online Education Center, Lead Archivist, Information Literacy Team Leader, and is currently Manager of the Learning and Resources Center and Manager of the Professional Development Center at Prince Mohamed Bin Fahad University. He chose an academic career in order to combine teaching, working with students alongside performing high-quality research. He has a Ph. D. in Library and Information Science with 22 years of experience working in academic institutions such as Neelion University, Qatar University Qatar Foundation, and Prince Mohammad Bin Fahd University.

His research interest includes information Science, Digital Assets Management, Academic libraries, open access, and the digital age.

Masoud Ariankhoo is a PhD candidate in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at Harvard University. His research focuses on the character of the Devil in the formative period of Islamic thought within the genres of Quranic exegesis, collections of prophetic sayings, and Sufi literature.

Aicha Azzaoui is a Metadata Coordinator at Northwestern University Library where she mainly catalogs Arabic, Persian, French, and Amazigh monographs. Her interest in codicology and paleography has grown since she started cataloging Arabic manuscripts from West Africa housed in Herskovitz Library.

Jake Benson currently catalogues the Persian manuscripts holdings of the John Rylands Research Institute and Library, University of Manchester part-time, generously funded by the Persian Heritage and Soudavar Memorial Foundations. He contributes TEI metadata to both the FIHRIST union catalogue for Islamicate manuscripts, and Manchester Digital Collections. His prior training as a bookbinder, conservator, and paper marbler inspired him to study Arabic, Persian, and Turkish sources on manuscript production. He shall soon complete his doctorate “The Advent of Abrī: The First Wave of Paper Marbling During the Long 16th Century (ca. 1496–1615)” at Leiden University.



Guy Burak is the librarian for Middle Eastern, Islamic, Jewish and African Studies at NYU. He has been involved in the Arabic Collections Online and the Afghanistan Digital Library.

Antara Bhattacharya is an undergraduate student at Harvard University.

Fehl Cannon is Field Director of the Library of Congress Overseas Office in Islamabad, Pakistan.

Dawn Childress is the UCLA Director of the Sinai Manuscripts Digital Library and Librarian for Digital Collections and Scholarship at UCLA's Digital Library Program. Her work centers on directing digital research and cultural heritage projects to support preservation and access, and on developing systems for describing and connecting complex cultural heritage materials. Dawn's current focus is on digital manuscript studies/cultures, sustainable digital project development, and collections as data. She is the recipient of two recent National Endowment for the Humanities grants to expand the work of the Sinai Manuscripts Digital Library. She is also a member of the International Interoperability Framework (IIF) Editorial Board.

Iman Dagher is the Arabic and Islamic Studies Metadata Librarian at the University of California, Los Angeles. She has been the Arabic NACO Funnel co-coordinator since 2013. She is an active member of the Middle Eastern Librarian Association (MELA), as well as the Program for Cooperative Cataloging (PCC). She is a current member of the PCC Standing Committee on Standards (SCS), the Core Committee on Cataloging: Asian and African Materials (CC:AAM) and the ALA/LC Romanization Review Board. Her research interests include authority control, identity management, and cataloging non-Latin materials.

Laura Daly recently graduated from the University of Alabama's Library and Information Studies program with an emphasis in archives and received a BA in Ancient Near Eastern Studies from BYU. Her research focuses on preserving, increasing awareness, and promoting access to the archival record of Palestine and has presented at the Society of American Archivists conference on Palestinian community archives. Since graduating, she has completed an internship at Duke University and will be starting a job with FamilySearch, a genealogical research company working to increase access to and digitization of Middle Eastern and North African records for genealogical research.



Huda Dayton joined the Near East section of the Library of Congress in January 2021 as an Arab area reference librarian. Prior to that she provided archival services to researchers and supported professional research at the National Archives and Records Administration in the Textual Research Room. She previously worked as a contractor in the Law Library cataloging and classifying Arabic, English, and French monographs and serials. Additionally she worked at the Georgetown University Library in Doha, Qatar, where she managed the Arabic collection and services. Before coming to the U.S. she was an academic lecturer at King Abdul Aziz University in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia for ten years. Huda earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in library science from King Abdul Aziz University and her master's degree in library and information science from Catholic University.

Rachel Deblinger is the Director of the Modern Endangered Archives Program (MEAP) at the UCLA Library, a granting program that funds the digitization and preservation of at-risk cultural heritage materials from around the world. MEAP grants facilitate archival documentation and open access to global voices that challenge established historical narratives. Deblinger completed her doctorate in History at UCLA. Her research focuses on Holocaust memory in America, media technology, and the intersection of philanthropy and representation

Sarah DeMott holds a PhD and MLS and is Research Librarian, Harvard University.

Hirad Dinavari is Library specialist in the Library of Congress' African and Middle Eastern Division.

Mitra Fakhrashrafi (she/her) is a curator and emerging librarian interested in creating places of sanctuary and indebted to border abolition organizing. Mitra is chair of Whippersnapper Gallery's Board of Directors and was recently awarded the 2021 Middlebrook Prize for Young Canadian Curators and the 2023 Art Museum Curatorial Residency Award. In 2020, Mitra published a Master's thesis on shisha ban's, surveillance and Muslim placemaking in the Greater Toronto Area. Mitra is a member of the Muslims in Canada Archives team — a participatory archive uniquely designed to document and share the history, lives, and experiences of Muslims across so-called



Canada. In her spare time, she listens to music that emerges from Toronto; a queer, trans, Black, Indigenous, and diasporic city.

Gayle Fischer is the Librarian for Islamic Law at Harvard Law School Library. She has consulted on digital projects launched by the HLS Program in Islamic Law, including SHARIAsource and SEARCHstrata.

Mahdi Ganjavi holds a PhD from the Department of Leadership, Higher and Adult Education at the University of Toronto. A former postdoctoral fellow at the School of Education and Social Policy at Northwestern University, he currently teaches at the University of Toronto. Ganjavi is a multilingual researcher and instructor with multiple degrees in education, information science, history, international law, and Iranian law. His research focuses on the cultural Cold War, the post-World War II transnational history of books, print, translation, and education, as well as the politics of archives and historiography in the contemporary Middle East. His first book, entitled "Education and the Cultural Cold War in the Middle East: The Franklin Book Programs in Iran" (2023), is published by I.B. Tauris. This investigation builds upon scholarship that has discussed the Cold War in relation to its ideological contestations, as well as in terms of cultural diplomacy and educational exchange.

J.J. Ghaddar is a Lebanese writer, archivist, historian, educator, and long-time community organizer. Currently, she is Assistant Professor at Dalhousie University's Department of Information Science in Kijipuktuk, Mi'kma'ki (homeland of the Mi'kmaq) also known as Halifax, Canada. She also serves as founding director of Dalhousie's Archives & Digital Media Lab. Last year, she completed a Postdoctoral Fellowship working with Raymond Frogner (National Centre for Truth & Reconciliation) and Dr. Greg Bak (History Dept.) at the University of Manitoba, funded by Canada's Social Science & Humanities Research Council. She has worked in archives and libraries around the world, including at the American University of Beirut's Jafet Library where she archived the personal papers of Dr. Constantine Zurayk who is credited with coining the term 'Nakba'; and at the Nelson Mandela Foundation's Centre of Memory in Johannesburg where she helped preserve the papers of the antiapartheid figure, Nelson Mandela. Currently, she is working on a co-authored article for *Upping the Anti*, and a co-edited volume on decolonized archival futures for the University of Manitoba press. Ghaddar holds a PhD and Master of Information from the University of Toronto.



Ismaeil Hakimi studied in Sharia Law-Shia Jurisprudence and Private Law in Iran and graduated from the USD School of Law in California. In addition to working with a variety of projects linked to Afghan justice system and legal reforms, he helped create a number of public libraries in Afghanistan. Hakimi has been employed by the Marriott Library, University of Utah, since 2018 as a senior research specialist and Liaison of the Aziz S. Atiya Collection which houses over 194,297 physical items including 154420 books, 37038 journal issues, 165 Master Thesis, and 169 PhD Thesis.

David Hannan is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Near Eastern Languages & Civilizations.

Lydia Harrington is a historian and curator who specializes in Middle Eastern art and architecture and Syrian and Lebanese American history. She is the Senior Curator for The Syria Museum, an initiative of the non-profit Syrian American Council that focuses on Syrian cultural heritage and the Syrian diaspora. She was a Postdoctoral Fellow in the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT in 2022-2023, working on her book manuscript on institutional architecture and educational reform at the end of the Ottoman Empire, particularly in Damascus, Beirut, Baghdad, and Istanbul. She earned her PhD from Boston University's History of Art and Architecture Department in 2022, having visited archives and sites in Lebanon, Turkey, and the UK for her dissertation research. In addition to work at the MIT Museum, the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, and the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, she has curated exhibitions on Boston's Little Syria neighborhood at MIT and the Massachusetts Historical Society.

Zakaria Adam Hassan is a researcher at the University of the East, Manila, Philippines.

Jay Holloway is the Director of End User Platform Services within the Global Product Management division at OCLC, where he focuses on the end-to-end user experience from discovery through delivery.

Heather Hughes is the Middle Eastern Studies Librarian at the University of Pennsylvania. She has previously worked at University of California at Santa Barbara and at the Hoover Archives. She holds an MA in Middle Eastern Studies and an MSIS. She is currently the Vice President of Mela after participation in various committees and serving on the Executive Committee as a Member at Large. She also recently served on the executive committee of AAUP's Penn chapter.



Elie Kahale is the Director of Digital Initiatives and Scholarship at AUB University Libraries. He is dedicated to various initiatives aimed at preserving the digital assets and cultural heritage objects within AUB Libraries, while also actively working to disseminate digital content to scholars, researchers, and a wider audience. Elie is a co-organizer of the AUB Digital Humanities Institute, where he collaborates with fellow scholars on projects related to digital liberal arts and digital humanities. Additionally, he plays a pivotal role as the co-organizer of AUB BL EAP MENA HUB activities bridging AUB Libraries with the British Library Endangered Archives Program.

Evyn Kropf is a librarian and curator of Islamic manuscripts at the University of Michigan Library. As a specialist in Islamic codicology and Arabic manuscript culture, her particular interests include writing material (especially paper), structural repairs, reading and collecting practices of the Ottoman era as well as the significance of pictograms and other visual content for Sufi knowledge transmission.

Blair Kuntz has been the Near and Middle Eastern Studies Librarian at the University of Toronto Libraries since 2003. Since then, Blair has presented papers at a number of international conferences on four continents (including three times at the Virginia Woolf conference) and has had papers published in journals such as *Progressive Librarian* and the *Journal of Radical Librarianship*. In 2013, Blair was a delegate of the Libraries and Archivists With Palestine delegation and is now one of the groups' social media coordinators. Blair is currently a conference committee member of the European Conference on e-Learning and the International Conference on Gender Research and is also the co-chair of the University of Toronto's Indigenous Metadata Committee.

Daniel Lowe is an award-winning curator who oversees the British Library's Arabic collections. Working across a diverse range of formats—including manuscripts, archives, print and digital—he takes a leading role in building and interpreting collections, as well as research and engagement activities with partners both in the United Kingdom and internationally. Between 2015 and 2019 he co-curated the Shubbak Literature Festival with Alice Guthrie. He curated the exhibition *Comics and Cartoon Art from the Arab World* at the British Library in 2017. In 2021, he co-curated the *Histories and Archives of Arabic Publishing* series with Dr Hana Sleiman. His work has been recognised by Art Fund who awarded him the prestigious New Collecting Award in 2022.



Samar El Mikati El Kaissi is the Associate University Librarian for Archives & Special Collections at the American University of Beirut (AUB) Libraries. BA, Lebanese American University, Beirut, Lebanon, 1980. MS, Library and Information Science, Simmons University, Boston, USA, 2005. Member of several international and national societies: The Islamic Manuscript Association (TIMA), UK; Lebanese Library Association (LLA); Modern Heritage Observatory (MOHO); UNESCO Memory of the World- Lebanon Committee.

Presented articles in some conferences: International Council on Archives, 2007; Photograph Preservation Workshop, 2009; CEDREC-USJ, 2011; MELCOM International Conference, 2011; The Eighth Islamic Manuscript Conference, 2012; IFLA Conference, 2012;; MELCOM 38th Conference , 2016; and at CNRS/IFPO colloquium, Formation Doctorale Études Critiques des Manuscrits, Archives et Inscriptions Arabes , 2017.

Co-authored with Dr. Nadia El-Cheikh a book chapter titled “Women at AUB: The Beginnings, 1905–1947” in “One Hundred and Fifty” and a chapter with Dr. Kaoukab Chebaro titled “Manuscripts Ownership and Readership at the American University of Beirut” published in *Manuscripts, Politics and Oriental studies: Life and Collections of Johann Gottfried Wetzstein (1815-1905) in Context*.

S. Berk Metin is a PhD student at Simon Fraser University. His research is on the history of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey. He studied at Leiden (MA) and Sciences Po (BA).

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.

Mark Muehlhaeusler is the Director of the Center of Excellence for the Middle East and Arab Cultures at AUC Libraries. He is in charge of collection development in Middle



Eastern Studies, and is involved in a number of digital initiatives, including the management of AUC's institutional repository.

Josh Mugler is Curator of Eastern Christian and Islamic Manuscripts at the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library in Collegeville, Minnesota. He and the HMML team catalog thousands of digitized manuscripts from a variety of cultures and contexts, with new name and title discoveries contributed to major authority file databases such as the Library of Congress. His doctoral research at Georgetown University examined Christian-Muslim relations in medieval Syria, focusing on an Arabic saint's life of the eleventh century. He lives in Minneapolis with his partner and two cats.

Stephennie Mulder is Associate Professor of Islamic Art and Architecture at the University of Texas at Austin. She is a specialist in Islamic art, architectural history, and archaeology. She works on the conservation of antiquities and cultural heritage sites endangered by war and illegal trafficking. She has been a consultant for SHOSI, the Saving the Heritage of Syria and Iraq initiative, sponsored by the Penn Cultural Heritage Center, the Smithsonian Institute, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and was on the Board of Directors for ASOR's Syrian Heritage Initiative, sponsored by the U.S. State Department. She also works as a consultant for the Department of Homeland Security's Cultural Property, Arts & Antiquities investigative group. Dr. Mulder, along with students, faculty and staff, founded UT Antiquities Action, an activist group that raises awareness about the accelerating loss of cultural heritage around the world.

Merrilee Proffitt is Senior Manager for the OCLC Research Library Partnership. She provides community development skills and expert support to institutions within the OCLC Research Library Partnership.

AJ Robinson is a subject librarian at Washington University in St. Louis for the areas of Islamic Studies, South Asian Studies, Women, Gender & Sexuality Studies, and interim (since January 2020) for Jewish Studies. They are a previous Atiyeh Prize awardee, and have volunteered for MELA on the Atiyeh, Digital Scholarship, Nominations, and Executive Committees.



Omar Salem is a student in the Department of Computer Science at the American University in Cairo, Egypt.

Muhannad Salhi, Ph.D. is the Arab World Specialist in the Near East Section at the Library of Congress since 2008. He holds a Master's degree in Middle Eastern Studies from the University of Chicago. His PhD is in History also from the University of Chicago. He has been part of a number of organizations and peer groups that focus on library policies and collection development. He has been involved in projects and events at the Library as well as authoring a number of essays and blogs about collections from the Near East Section. He has received and briefed both foreign and domestic delegations and groups on behalf of the division. He has traveled on international delegations representing the Library of Congress as well as appearing in numerous media outlets. He has lectured widely on the library's collections in addition to modern Middle Eastern history at several institutions.

Denise Soufi is the Metadata Librarian for Middle Eastern Languages at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is a member of the Board of Directors for Open Rules for Cataloging, which aims to create an openly available cataloging code with concrete guidelines and models for describing library resources so that catalogers can efficiently accomplish their work. She is also an active participant in the Middle East Librarians Association. Her interests are the application of DEIA principles to cataloging and non-Latin script materials cataloging.

Amanda Hannoosh Steinberg is the Librarian for Islamic Art & Architecture at the Harvard Fine Arts Library. She curates, manages, and maintains the Fine Arts Library's collection of books, special collections, and other materials related to Islamic Art & Architecture, as well as offering research help, teaching, and outreach to the Harvard community and beyond. In the past, she worked for George Washington University as their MENA Librarian, and she earned her PhD from the University of Pennsylvania in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations. She has been a member of MELA since 2015, and has been a member of the Education Committee and one of the founders of the Social Justice Committee. She has never had the opportunity to be a member of a union.

Hong Ta-Moore is Head, Middle East and South Asian Acquisitions and Cataloging Section, Library of Congress.



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 a strong background in staff instruction both in her current position and as a former staff instructor at the Library of Congress.

Rafik Yacoub is a student in the Department of Computer Science at the American University in Cairo, Egypt.

Cyrus F. Zarganj is a Special Formats Catalog Librarian and Associate Professor at the Libraries of the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. With 20 years of experience in cataloging, media, and technical services, Cyrus is an expert in performing original descriptive and subject cataloging for all special formats materials. Additionally, he offers mentorship and training to junior catalogers and aids in resolving difficult special format cataloging challenges.

Rustin Zarkar is Field Director of the Library of Congress Overseas Office in Cairo, Egypt.

Ryan Zohar is the Middle East Studies Librarian at Georgetown University where he builds collections, supports research, and connects users with the Library. He holds an M.S. in Library & Information Science from Long Island University and an M.A. in Near Eastern Studies from New York University. He is active in the Middle East Librarians Association (MELA) where he currently chairs the Book Award Committee. His research focuses on cultural production in the Arab world during the 20th century, Mizrahi intellectual history, the Cold War in the Middle East, and the politics of knowledge and has been published in *The American Archivist*, *Banipal Magazine of Modern Arab Literature*, *Items: Insights from the Social Sciences*, *MELA Notes*, and *New Middle Eastern Studies*.