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MELA 2023 Business Meeting

NOVEMBER 1ST, 2023

3:00PM EST

THOMSON HOUSE, MCGILL UNIVERSITY

MONTREAL, CANADA

Members in Attendance: Aicha Azzaoui; AJ Robinson; Amal Cavender; Amal Morsy; Amanda Steinberg; Anaïs Salamon; Arthur Decker; Asuman Tezcan; Baslam al-Haddad; Blair Kuntz; Carissa Pastuch; Carol V Jarvis; Cyrus Zarganj; Dale J. Correa; David Faust; Deborah Schlein; Denise Soufi; Emana Kopycki; Eve Lauria; Evyn Kropf; Farshad Sonboldel; Fehf Cannon; Gayle Fischer; George Fawzi; Guy Burak; Heather Hughes; Hiram Dinavari; Huda Dayton; Imad Abuelgasim; Iman Dagher; Ioana Feodorov; Jamila Ghaddar; Jake Benson; Joan Weeks; Justin Parrott; Kioumars Ghereghlou; Laila Moustafa; Laura L. Wong; Lisa Gardinier; Magda Gad; Mark Muehlhaeusler; Marlis Saleh; Mehdi Rahimzadeh; Michael Hopper; Mohamed Hamed; Mozghan Jalalzadeh; Neda Zeraatkar; Nedim Bali; Nora Avetyan; Patrick Visel; Roberta L. Dougherty; Rustin Zarkar; Ryan Zohar; Salma Abumeeiz; Sarah DeMott; Sean Swanick; Walid Sellal; William Kopycki; Yasha Razizadeh

President Mohamed Hamed called the meeting to order at 3:00pm.

Both the agenda for this meeting and the minutes of the 2022 Business meeting (previously distributed on MELANET) were approved.

Awards Committee Announcements

George N. Atiyeh Prize: The chair, Anaïs Salamon (McGill University) announced this year's winner, Mitra Fakhrashrafi. After completing a Masters Degree in Arts Geography and Planning, Mitra enrolled at the University of Toronto iSchool. Her MA thesis and accompanying art exhibition focused on how the City of Toronto hookah/shisha ban legislation passed in 2020 "shaped Muslim peoples' experiences (...) in the Greater Toronto Area". During her undergraduate studies, Mitra Fakhrashrafi was the Women & Trans Centre programming director where she realized that public programming can be a powerful tool for social transformation. As a graduate student, she engaged in social justice initiatives, advocating for the rights of Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, and racialized people in Toronto

Mitra Fakhrashrafi's interests lie at the intersection of art librarianship, community archives, advocacy and diaspora. She recently joined the Muslims in Canada Archive (MiCA), a participatory archive aiming at recording the history of Canada's Muslim populations. She is looking forward to meeting library and information professionals working with Middle Eastern and/or Muslim communities, engaging in information literacy, managing digitization projects and multilingual resources.

MELA Book Award: The chair, Ryan Zohar (Georgetown University) announced the winner for this year: Mahdi Ganjavi's *Education and the Cultural Cold War in the Middle East: The Franklin Book Programs in Iran* (London: Bloomsbury, I.B. Tauris, 2023). The committee found this to be a "...remarkable work, in part, because it shows the importance of a particular type of text: translations. Translations do not always get the attention they deserve, and many institutions do not collect them at all. By taking these texts as the work's primary focus, Ganjavi shows us why translations should not be taken for granted in histories of publishing and

education. Ganjavi zeroes in on things like funds for publication, publishing, and distribution. While these subjects are germane to the type of work we do as librarians, they are not always considered worthy of intellectual attention. Ganjavi convincingly shows why, in understanding educational programs and Cold War jostling over ideas in Iran, we should care about these facets of the ‘book business,’ so to speak.”

MELA Book Award Committee 2023 was comprised of Hiba Abid (New York Public Library), Guy Burak (New York University), Arthur Decker (Northampton Community College), Akram Habibulla (Indiana University), and Ryan Zohar (Georgetown University).

Committee Chair Reports

Nominating Committee: The chair, AJ Robinson (Washington University in St. Louis) reported that the excellent team of volunteers included Denise Soufi and Neda Zeraatkar. There were two candidates for VP/Program Chair and three for Member at Large, and the ballot response rate exceeded 70 percent. Following e-voting, the results were Marlis J. Saleh for Member at-Large, and Guy Burak for Vice President/Program Chair.

Committee on Cataloging: (Chair: Cyrus Ford Zarganj, University of Nevada, Las Vegas)

Cyrus gave the full report, which is reproduced here:

Members: Cyrus Zarganj, University of Nevada, Las Vegas (chair), Magda Gad, Stanford University (past chair and CC:AAM Liaison), Aicha Azzaoui, Northwestern University, Engy Elgammal, Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies, Cairo, Egypt, Pavel Angelos, Princeton University (webmaster until May 2023), Jake Benson, University of Manchester, Amal Morsi, Library of Congress

The ConC held nine Zoom meetings and used Google Drive for documentation.

Activities and Projects

ConC Website Migration

The ConC website, which served as a vital hub for disseminating information about the committee's activities and initiatives, was previously maintained and updated by Princeton University until June 2023. However, there was a risk of losing all of ConC's website content. To prevent this, the committee initiated a migration process over the course of four months, starting in March and concluding in July 2023. The migration process was led by MELA's webmaster, Justin Parrott, in close collaboration with Pavel Angelos, Cyrus Zarganj, and Iman Dagher. The team worked to ensure that all the contents of ConC's website were transferred to a new hosting platform, guaranteeing the website's continued existence and accessibility to interested parties. Thanks to the team's hard work and dedication, the migration was successfully completed, and ConC's website contents are now securely hosted by MELA. This ensures that valuable resources and information continue to be available to the committee's members and the wider community.

ConC Workshop Series

The committee conducted one workshop for cataloging non-book materials:

The third workshop of the series “**Cataloging Middle Eastern Non-Book Materials Using RDA and MARC21: Objects**” was held on Wednesday, September 27, 2023 (for 60 minutes).

The workshop was led by Cyrus F. Zarganj, and was moderated by Engy Elgammal. This informative series is set to continue until 2024 and features recordings and slides of the sessions that can be accessed on the ConC website for future reference.

Collaboration with MELA LCSH Working Group (SACO Proposal)

ConC has been engaged in a productive collaboration with the MELA Library of Congress Subject Headings Working Group. Together, they have been working diligently to prepare a comprehensive proposal to SACO, which aims to recommend changes to the current subject headings used by the Library of Congress. The proposal is geared towards enhancing the accuracy and relevance of the subject headings, thereby enabling more efficient and effective searches for library users. Members of the MELA LCSH Working Group are Iman Dagher, Denise Soufi, Amal Morsy, Basma Chebani, Cyrus Zarganj, Engy Elgammal, and Magda Fathy Gad.

OCLC Member Merge Program for Arabic Records

Amal Morsy, Aicha Azzaoui, and Cyrus Zarganj, have joined the OCLC Member Merge Program for Arabic Records. Iman Dagher initiated this project in coordination with the OCLC merging record team, and a call to join the group was shared through MELA listserv. The goal is to assess and merge duplicate Arabic bibliographic records (as well as other languages) in OCLC according to strict criteria. This project aims to eliminate duplicate Arabic records in OCLC, which will ultimately improve the process of discovery. The members are receiving training to become independent. Members of the OCLC Member Merge Program for Arabic Records are Iman Dagher, Aicha Azzaoui, Amal Morsy, Balsam Haddad, Cyrus Zarganj, Hend Mourad, Latifa Baali, Nora Avetyan, Peter Fletcher, Susan Lane, and Usama Salama.

ConC programs at MELA Conference 2023

The panel titled "Navigating Ethics and Repair in Manuscript Cataloging" has been organized by the committee to address the various challenges that scholars, librarians, and archivists face when

it comes to responsible stewardship of manuscripts. The panel will be a hybrid one, and will include:

- Evyn Kropf, Librarian for Middle Eastern & North African Studies, University of Michigan
- Jake Benson, Research Associate, University of Manchester
- Aicha Azzaoui, Metadata Coordinator, Northwestern University
- Moderator: Cyrus Zarganj, Special Formats Librarian, University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Arabic NACO Funnel Statistics: Iman Dagher gave the report. The Arabic NACO Funnel remains active. During the time frame of September 2022 to September 2023, the Funnel members have created 469 new name authority records and 50 new series records. The Funnel members have also improved 510 existing name authority records (personal names and corporate bodies) and 10 existing series records.

Update from CC:AAM: Magda Fathy Gad gave the report. The ALA Core Committee on Cataloging: Asian and African Materials (CC:AAM), chaired by Robert Rendall (Columbia University Libraries), organized the workshop “Developing ALA-LC Romanization Tables Alongside New Technologies for Improved Discovery: Case Study ADLaM” on Wednesday, August 23, 2023. It was presented by Beacher Wiggins, Charles Riley, Erin Freas-Smith, Neil Patel, Jessalyn Zoom and moderated by Boutsaba Janetvilay and Robert Rendell. This workshop looked at the newly created Romanization table for ADLaM, a script developed in the late 1980s for a group of Fulani languages spoken chiefly in West Africa. The table was independently created by Africana cataloger Charles Riley of Yale University over several years in response to the marked increase in publications in ADLaM script. The program highlighted the development of the ADLaM Romanization table with active engagement of the script user community. The new table covers several areas of development, including the display of Unicode code points to clarify the identification of the characters in the table, the test

of character input in the Bibframe Editor MARVA, and the creation and integration of a bi-directional transliteration tool into the ScriptShifter—an application to facilitate input of non-Latin scripts. This process underscores the critical role played by technology to streamline the workflow of romanization and improve bibliographic accuracy and discoverability of non-Latin script material. The presentation concluded with a future look at the potential of technological integration and the role of the Review Board.

Social Justice Committee: The chair, Aicha Azzaoui (Northwestern University) gave the report. For the third season of the series, the committee chose the theme “Lives in the Margins: Ethnic and Religious Minorities in the Middle East,” for which they invited scholars researching minority groups to speak about the questions they have been attempting to answer and the barriers they have faced accessing resources, as well as information professionals to reflect on whose heritage is being preserved, and how, and why or why not. From December 2022 to March 2023, SJC hosted five lecturers from around the world who handle materials from the nebulous region called the Middle East. To express our gratitude for the lecturers’ time and effort, the committee offered a \$250 honorarium to each lecturer, which was accepted by three of the lecturers and paid from \$935 raised in the committee’s GoFundMe campaign.

Lastly, the Committee would like to extend its appreciation and thanks to everyone who has donated to our lecture series as well as to Harvard University for allowing these lectures to be hosted through their Zoom account. Aicha announced that SJC has received \$6000 from the MELA Executive Board in support to fund future lecture series. In addition to Aicha, the committee’s members included: Amanda Hannoush Steinberg (Harvard University); Laila Hussein Moustafa (University of Illinois); Leili Seifi (University of Birjand, Iran); Denise Soufi (UNC-Chapel Hill); Asuman Tezcan Mirer (Stanford University); Joan Weeks (Library of Congress) and Neda Zeraatkar (Emory University)

Digital Scholarship Interest Group (DSIG): The chair, Gayle Fischer (Harvard University) gave the following report. This year, the Steering Committee has:

- Held two virtual meetings to plan and carry forward the group's work
- Maintained the MELA DSIG mailing list
- Co-organized a roundtable discussion for the MELA annual meeting in partnership with OpenITI team members. The roundtable topic addressed matters of Arabic-script OCR/HTR technology, transcription, and machine learning, focusing on the possibilities for collaboration between library workers and DS practitioners outside of the library profession.

The DSIG Steering Committee is currently comprised of Nora Avetyan, Gayle Fischer, Wafa Isfahani, AJ Robinson, and Michael Toler, with Dale Correa serving as the past chair. Current terms for several of the Steering Committee members will end this year, so the recruitment of new members, including a chair, is of the utmost importance. For MELA members interested in joining the Steering Committee, please watch for an announcement on the MELANET listserv. Membership in the broader interest group is open to all, and instructions for joining the DSIG mailing list are on the DSIG page of the MELA website.

MECDI (Middle East Collection Development Initiative) update: Sean Swanick (Duke University) noted that MECDI is its own committee not affiliated with MELA. With Rustin Zarkar now with the Library of Congress and as such, no longer with the committee, Mohamed Hamed and Blair Kuntz are now serving in his place. There are 12 institutions represented; over the past year there have been four meetings of the board, with one full meeting of more than 15 members in attendance. Next steps will have interested members agreeing to collect certain languages or countries, i.e. Kurdish, Amazigh, Oman and Syria. Last meeting showed that people were not necessarily ready

for such a division, so the board will use themselves as “guinea pigs” to test the process.

Endangered Libraries and Archives Committee: Committee Chair Guy Burak (New York University) gave a brief update. The committee is still compiling the list of available grants. The hope is to find ways to formalize the relationship with American University of Beirut around the British Library's Endangered Archives Program (EAP). The committee had the opportunity to advise a Dutch funding agency on a project they were considering funding in Iraq.

MELA Metrics Working Group: Guy Burak (chair) reported that the group will have instructions for Alma users as to how to report and update their statistics.

Education Committee & Mentorship Program: The committee’s chair, Sarah DeMott (Harvard University) gave the report. Over the past year the committee held monthly meetings except for December-January, and October. In addition to Sarah, the committee includes Amanda Hannoosh Steinberg (member since November 2016) who will be rotating off after seven years; Salma Abumeeiz, UCLA (November 2020) – elected head of education committee and mentorship program; Balsam Haddad, American Islamic College (November 2021); Neda Zeraatkar, (November 2022); and Deborah Schlein, Princeton University (November 2022).

To date, the committee held two of three instances of its Career Workshop Series, which included the following themes:

1. Perspectives from Middle East Librarians (December 2021)
2. Building a Portfolio & Career Materials (May 5, 2023)
(presenters: Dale Correa, Deborah Schlein, Salma Abumeeiz, Rustin Zarkar, Amal Morsy)
3. Global Positions in Middle East Librarianship (TBD Spring 2024)

For the 2023 MELA Annual Meeting, the committee organized an education roundtable, “Always Political: Sharing the politics of working in Middle East Librarianship” and panel: “Romanization Instructional Practices”.

The committee also drafted meeting proceedings to submit MELA Notes for November 2023, “Precarity within MELA Profession”.

Regarding the Mentorship Program, Sarah reported that there were two new applications for Mentees that we have been unable to place due to a shortage of Mentors; this included a PhD candidate in the United States and an associate professor in Turkey. She encouraged MELA members to serve as willing mentors in the program.

MELA Officer Reports

MELA Listserv Manager: The chair, Evyn Kropf (University of Michigan), shared the report. Reproduced here as follows:

“The MELA Listserv Manager maintains several lists for our MELA community, all hosted and archived on google groups. This report includes reminders of these lists and updates on their activity.

“All are reminded of the virtual community that is the [MELANET-L listserv](#) — as presently conceived “an email list devoted to Middle East librarianship” to which any interested party may subscribe. As of 1 November, there are **727 email addresses subscribed** (some members are subscribed under multiple addresses) with **48 subscribers** added since last year’s MELA business meeting (30 November 2022). A few colleagues that have retired or moved on to other fields have unsubscribed.

“The list is intended to facilitate and invite mutual support, open knowledge sharing, and respectful discussion related directly to the work of MENA / SWANA librarianship, but notably excludes

commercial advertisements and discussion of vendors and their products. The “list conditions” (guidelines for posting) are available online for open review, on the MELA website under the [About MELA >> Communications >> MELANET-L Email List](#). Following a repeated incident of harassment, the guidelines were updated in April of this year to better support and protect list members. Colleagues are reminded that MELANET invites respectful, constructive communication and that defamation will not be tolerated. Misuse of MELANET may result in moderation, with a second violation leading to removal from the list. Removal may be appealed to the MELA Executive Committee for review. Again, all interested colleagues are welcome to subscribe, and may contact the Listserv Manager via email (listowner@mela.us), [via the form on the MELA website](#) or [via google groups](#).

“Colleagues are also reminded of **mebookvendors** the [Middle East Book Vendors List](#), formerly hosted at Stanford by our colleague John Eilts, but now managed by our Listserv Manager. There are currently 114 email addresses subscribed. This list is mentioned to new subscribers of MELANET-L and also under a note on the MELA website under [About MELA >> Communications >> MELANET-L Email List](#). This list is “for the confidential exchange of information about the vendors of library materials from the countries of the Middle East (broadly defined). Vendors are not permitted to subscribe to the list so that open discussion may take place. Members are also asked not to forward any list postings.

“Colleagues are also reminded of the [MELA DSIG list](#), offered by the [MELA Digital Scholarship Interest Group](#). The list is open to specialists interested in the intersections of Middle Eastern & North African Studies librarianship (broadly defined) and digital scholarship, and currently has **82 email addresses subscribed**. The list is intended especially for circulating opportunities for training and community building (such as conferences and workshops), news of projects and initiatives, features of tools and approaches, requests for advice, and other relevant topics. All are welcome to subscribe.

“Colleagues are also reminded of [mideastcat-l](#), offered by the [MELA Committee on Cataloging](#), and managed with support from our Listserv Manager. This list “serves as a forum for discussions of cataloging topics related to Middle Eastern material” and currently has **146 email addresses subscribed** with 8 subscribers added since last year’s MELA meeting. All are welcome to subscribe.

“In addition to these lists, the Listserv Manager continues to manage the Google Group for the MELA Executive Board which threads and archives messages to and among the Board members. Further, as a standing member of the Social Media Committee, the Listserv Manager continues to contribute to maintaining the MELA social media presence, primarily on Twitter.

“If you have any suggestions for policies or management of the lists or require assistance subscribing or managing your subscription, please do not hesitate to contact listowner@mela.us.”

MELA Notes Editor: Farshad Sonboldel (University of California, San Diego) presented the report summarized as follows. Farshad is in the process of transforming MELA Notes into a peer-reviewed journal; this is being done after initial consultation and approval from the Executive Board. Farshad noted the following benefits of the peer-review model:

1. Enhance quality with articles receiving close review and scrutiny through experts in the field.
2. Increased credibility with other scholars and practitioners.
3. Improved impact from citations and references.

Farshad also proposed the following steps towards this transformation:

- A. Establish editorial policies, revising the scope of the journal and establish clear guidelines for authors including formatting and style.
- B. Form an editorial board of subject-matter experts who will play a key role in the review process.
- C. Peer-review process implementation: structured to include initial screening, reviewer selection, peer-review evaluation, decision-making and review process.
- D. Continuous improvement via the editorial board.
- E. Publication and dissemination, to include copy-editing and typesetting processing.

Farshad explained that MELA Notes can be an open-access journal, not just a “free journal”. He has already worked on indexing and would like to create OCR for individual articles so they can be better discoverable. Farshad has additional details that he is willing to share with anyone interested or willing to help in this process.

Mohamed Hamed noted that this topic will be further discussed in the New Business.

Webmaster/Web & Social Media Committee: Justin Parrott (New York University in Abu Dhabi), shared the following statistics and key updates for MELA’s website (<http://www.mela.us>):

Usage statistics:

- ~21,500 views (a significant increase over last year)
- ~10,000+ unique visitors (same)
- ~5,000 hits from Google (slight increase)
- ~540 hits from Facebook (slight increase)
- ~290 hits from Twitter (same)
- 59% views from the United States (slight decrease)
- 113 countries visited the site (slight increase)

Website updates:

- Activate Astra advanced theme for WordPress
- Significantly improved mobile performance

- MELA Committee on Cataloging sub-website now migrated to mela.us domain and operational
- *Remain vigilant against phishing and spoof email attacks*

Promoting MELA activities:

- Publishing book reviews
- Supporting the Social Justice Committee (SJC) lecture series
- Posting statements on behalf of the SJC

Social Media Committee updates:

- 4,200 followers on Facebook (increase by +300)
- 2,241 followers on Twitter (increase by 240)
- 201 YouTube subscribers (slight increase)

MELA Statistical Database:

- 18 institutions registered
- Reminder to input data and/or create account for your institution

Website Hosting Migration Proposal:

- SiteGround is proposed as new domain and hosting service
- Current cost: \$718.34/year
- Anticipated cost: \$535.75
- Migration confirmed possible with SiteGround
- SiteGround can offer low-cost dedicated IP address and scale-up options

Reminders to MELA members:

- Committee chairs to send updates
- Notify of inaccuracies or typos on the site
- Presenters to send slides, materials, etc.
- Members to send content to Social Media Committee and MELANET-L

Secretary-Treasurer: William Kopycki (Library of Congress) gave the report with focus on the financial report [appended to these minutes]. Some key narratives include:

The Social Justice Committee Speakers Series still had contributions during the first and second quarters of the year. Following a proposal, and with the approval of the Executive Board, William marked \$6,000 of general treasury funds for SJC use over the next three years to support honorariums for future speakers.

Similarly, William reported additional transfers (noted in the financial report) to other award funds, notably the Atiyeh Award, which will help boost their activities. He will send out periodic reports on each fund's budget to committee chairs so they can plan their activities accordingly.

With a current "surplus" of unused/uncommitted funds, MELA has been able to keep registration fees as low as possible, far lower than most other area studies library association meeting fees. He also thanked this year's sponsors.

At the conclusion of William's report, Mohamed Hamed presented him with a certificate of appreciation on behalf of the other members of the Executive Board for having served in the role of secretary-treasurer for nearly 20 years.

Vice President/Program Chair/President-Elect: Heather Hughes (University of Pennsylvania) made a brief statement, thanking this year's programming committee (William Kopycki, Ryan Zohar, Iman Dagher) and said she looks forward to being president of MELA next year.

President's address

President Mohamed Hamed delivered his address, as follows:

"Thank you all for your presence and for going through the two full days of meetings. This year as far as I know we have more in person than online, so MELA is going to normal years of in person

attendance, however I am not sure about the next year. MESA will be online, so we can go this route or organize it separately.

“I would like to also thank our sponsors for their continued generous support to MELA. Without your support, we would not be able to cover the expenses of the meeting especially in the hybrid model. With this I thank all the sponsors including Dar al-Mandumah, East View, Firdosi , Gingko Library , Iranfarhang, Labibah Kitabei, Libra Books , Leila Books, Noorsoft, al-Muthanna, Sulaiman’s Bookshop, and Khajistan.

“I would like to also thank my colleagues in the executive board who worked tirelessly to manage and keep MELA active in all directions throughout the year. We had meetings every two months, and sometimes, every month and we moved to as-needed to make sure to address any work needed in a timely manner.

“In addition, I would like to thank all the committees and working groups for their hard work. It was a very active year for all the committees and working groups, so they really deserve to be acknowledged.

“As I previously mentioned, when I started in 2008 as a member of MELA, I was thinking that I know enough about how things work in MELA, but I was completely wrong. What I learned through the last two years was much more and deeper than the 12 years before. For that, I truly appreciate the opportunity that I was able to serve MELA and based on this very rewarding experience I encourage everyone to serve. MELA needs help from all members.

“Last but not least, I would like to wish the new president Heather Hughes, and the vice president Guy Burak all the best for a productive and successful year to come in sha’ Allah.

“New Business

“Finally, as the leaving president, I would like to say a few words about the war on Gaza, and to encourage MELA members to act upon the list of actions in [EB’s statement on Gaza](#).

“When I started in 2000 as an Arabic cataloger at AUC, one of the first books I was asked to do original subject cataloging for was about Palestine. I tried my best to find the country name Palestine in LOC

subject headings, but I did not find it. Therefore, I was disappointed, but I thought it is just me with no subject cataloging expertise. When I asked my mentor, she confirmed that there is no country called Palestine in LOC geographic locations, and that materials about Palestine are under “Arab-Israeli conflict”, or “Palestinian, Arabs” as if Palestinians have no land. This is the narrative that we all know, and have to use as librarians and catalogers, and consequently researchers, so no one would think differently.

“Recently, with the huge efforts in the world about equity, diversity and inclusion, libraries also worked to get these activities implemented in libraries in various aspects. From that, we witnessed “Change the Subject” efforts worked, and as a former alien, this meant a lot to me. To actively deal with the DEIBJ, at MELA level, MELA members created the very active committee on Social Justice to promote all aspects of social justice in Middle East studies librarianship.

“Before that but similarly, with the war on Iraq and other wars and conflicts in the area MELA members were actively collecting, preserving, and providing help represented in the two committees of Iraqi libraries and Endangered Libraries committees. Similarly, MELA has the Education committee with the mission to educate the MELA community and support the MELA community to perform the work efficiently. In addition, other MELA committees such as the Cataloging committee, the committee of Digital Scholarship and the committee for Web and Social Media are very active and play significant roles in the mission and the goals for MELA.

“Returning to the war on Gaza, I can tell that MELA committees that are mentioned above, as well as individual MELA members should all work together to center the voice of Palestine, Palestinian libraries, authors, writers and booksellers and all people in Palestine. We all need to work together to implement the action items on the Statement on Gaza, but at the same time, I ask MELA as an organization to advocate and protect its members and to provide security for the members to do the work needed. One day, I really hope with all these collective efforts, Palestine will become a geographic location at LOC

subject headings where we can see schools, universities, libraries and more of the cultural and educational institutions flourish.

“New Business items:

“Create MELA Working Group for Palestine where we all can work together on:

- Building bibliography on Palestine
- Social media archiving
- Cataloging enhancements
- Social media and social justice projects and efforts
- And the list goes on ...

“Finally, I would like to remind the attendees with the action items of MELA statement on the War on Gaza:

- Call on MELA librarians to provide students, researchers, and the public with the resources and the tools to evaluate information resources and avoid misinformation and dehumanizing bias.
- Advocate librarians to collect, preserve and document current events and to participate in local, national and international efforts in this regard.
- Stand firm as an organization against any type of discrimination, including against Palestinian and Israeli thinkers, writers, authors, artists, or otherwise.
- Recommit to supporting any efforts to protect cultural institutions such as libraries, archives, and museums in the areas of conflict.
- Call on library administrations to protect library workers from doxxing and surveillance

“Thank you all, and congratulations again for the successful conference, and hope to see you all in MELA 2024.”

New and Miscellaneous Business (open-floor discussion)

Mohamed then opened the floor for comments and discussion on the above points or any other topics.

Denise Soufi commented that she would like to see the Committee on Cataloging to develop a database of problematic subject headings that any MELA member can submit to track and address; this is not necessarily something that CoC would be responsible for, but such a database can be used to track research and MELA members working on this, ultimately such proposals have to be sent to SACO, but in the event of proposals not being approved, librarians could consider working in their own local systems. She gave the example of the heading “Palestine question” as a proposal, whereby a committee of seven persons worked on this, including reviewing sources such as the Office of the Historian in the Department of State, WorldCat, etc. which was used to justify the need for this heading. Despite some pushback, the proposal (qualified by dates) was ultimately approved by SACO. Mohamed Hamed and Iman Dagher added that it is possible to use MARC 655 to add additional terms when the subject heading is not appropriate to help provide additional access.

Sean Swanick reported that he, Deborah Schlein, and others have submitted a web archiving proposal to the Ivy Plus Libraries Confederation for archiving sites related to the destruction of Palestine, noting that social media sites cannot be archived, but web sites can.

Jamila Ghaddar (Dalhousie University) suggested developing a separate cataloging/subject standard as used for other indigenous peoples (example: Brian Deer’s Classification System). She also reported her work archiving social media archiving after being contacted by Palestine Land Studies Center (AUB), setting up some of the technical work to archive these sites. There are a number of volunteers working on this. Mohamed suggested that Jamila work with Sean’s group on this topic.

AJ Robinson: They reported being in a meeting with Librarians and Archivists with Palestine, where Sharon Smith suggested conducting an activity with Palestine Museum in Connecticut; others are welcome to join this. Mohamed added that this would be a good project for the Endangered Libraries Committee.

MELA Notes Peer Reviewing/Indexing

Ryan Zohar asked about indexing of MELA Notes. Farshad reported that JSTOR provides very little metadata; they are not easily accessible. If you go through Google Scholar, it is hard to find materials. If you search by Author's name, you may not find all articles in the whole archive. The older issues of MELA Notes are simply images, and therefore not searchable, although newer issues are PDFs and therefore more accurate. Farshad proposes OCR'ing the complete archive of MELA Notes and making them available through E-Scholarship, giving each article a DOI. This will help improve access to MELA Notes.

It was asked if part of MELA Notes can be produced outside the peer-review process to give a chance for all members to publish? Farshad answered that we will have to have an editorial board first before deciding. Historically we've had reports and meeting minutes so in the existing format, it has always been possible. He does not want to commit to an answer until an editorial board is formed.

Akram Habibulla (University of Indiana): Will the new MELA Notes be once a year? Farshad replied that for the first year or two, we can do internal reviews to see how the whole process will work; keeping it an annual will enable the process to be controlled.

Jamila Ghaddar: Will there be a change in language policy for MELA Notes; can articles be proposed in other languages of the region? Farshad replied that MELA Notes has had supporting content in

Arabic and other languages; the primary language of articles will remain in English given that MELA Notes is for a Western academic audience. However, this will have to be something taken into consideration by the editorial board. What about translations? This will also have to be reviewed and considered; it requires in-depth discussion.

Rustin Zarkar asked about the peer review process for MELA Notes. When the incoming editorial board reviews articles for the first year, do we say this is “peer review” or not until external reviewers start reviewing? Farshad said that this process will be gradual, and that the plan is to state clearly to authors how the articles will be reviewed (editorial board vs. outside reviewers). The hope is that by having MELA Notes indexed and announced as being “peer review”, there will be more submissions to review.

Deborah Schlein asked if reviewers will be compensated for doing the work. Farshad replied that as an open-access journal, there may be income from some of the articles which could, in theory, be used to offset the review process.

Blair Kuntz (University of Toronto): Who are the peer reviewers going to be? Some journals allow the option to be reviewed by people you know, and others have double-blind reviews. Farshad replied that the board would be librarians and scholars/researchers from outside the community, however, it will have to be up to the editorial board to decide. Regarding the process, as far as it is internal, the goal is to do a single-blind review until more articles are submitted. If it is not that many, it doesn't make sense to send all the articles out to external reviewers as the whole process will take a lot of time. Internal blind review may be ideal for the first couple of years.

[Question from chat]: How will book reviews be handled? Farshad replied that book reviews will remain the same, under the Book Review Editor.

Guy Burak: We may want to rename MELA Notes if it is going to be peer-reviewed. Farshad explained this will have to be considered by the editorial board.

David Faust (University of Minnesota): there are existing template packages available for creating open-access journals; how much research have you done into these? Farshad replied that he is looking into this within the University of California system; but everything goes through the e-Scholarship process, which makes it convenient since there is already support to help carry out the work.

Akram Habibulla: When MELA Notes becomes a peer-reviewed journal, there should still be a need for a newsletter for announcements and other news items. Farshad: We have short reports, usually related to the annual meeting. We can keep all of these in the annual publications as separate from the peer-report of the journal.

MELA Metrics

Ryan Zohar asked about having an Alma import training session. Mohamed said they were not able to have such a session over the past year as planned. He was planning to create his own step-by-step video since University of California uses Alma as its ILS, however, university regulations require that all videos have captioning, something that the library does not have a budget for at the moment. Mohamed said he was willing to work one-on-one with any other members to share the steps and then that member can make a video. MELA Metrics website is up and running, but manual input is difficult to do; with more libraries using Alma, there is a growing need for automation and training to populate the database.

Archives Group

Iman Dagher asked if MELA could have an archives group. Jamila Ghaddar stated that while there is overlap between libraries and

archives, there does not exist a professional body dealing with archives and special collections for the region. Balsam Haddad added that there should be an archivists' committee since the systems and databases used are different from that used in libraries. William Kopycki said if there is enough interest among MELA members, then a working group might first be formed, and then later it can be presented to the Executive Board to be a committee. Jamila requested those interested in forming such a group to contact her; Mohamed stated that information about the working group will be posted on MELANET.

Following announcements, the meeting adjourned at 5:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

William J. Kopycki
Secretary-Treasurer