

Tanıtım-Değerlendirme / *Reviews*

**MELCom International: Middle East Libraries Committee,
The European Association of Middle East Librarians**

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Dear Colleagues,

I would like to make my way to the Journal of Turkish librarianship with a short text in English, introduction myself indirectly by telling you about a professional organisation known as MELCom to which I devote a significant part of my energy and time. In the future I hope to tell you about other such activities and build a bridge between colleagues in Turkey and elsewhere.

MELCom is the acronym of the Middle East Libraries Committee. It was founded in the UK in the second half of 1960s, following the expansion of Middle Eastern studies in the Britain. It was an era whereby new libraries and new collections were established while existing libraries were receiving more resources to develop their holdings. In order to «unite forces» so to speak, an official report recommended the creation of inter-university library committees to work in coordination in order to cover the needs of both scholars and students specialized in Middle Eastern studies.

The two names that must be mentioned as the first organizers of this committee are Professors J.D. Pearson and Derek Hopwood, respectively Librarian of the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London and Middle East Bibliographer at St. Antony's College in Oxford at the time.

The committee met in 1967 in Cambridge for the first time and since then has met regularly twice a year.

The international contacts of the MELCom librarians through the years led

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to a meeting outside the UK, in Aix-en-Provence (France) in 1979 whereby MELCom International was conceived. It has since met annually both in Europe and elsewhere. The British committee known as MELCom UK remains however an important component of MELCom International.

MELCom International has celebrated its 30th anniversary in Oxford last June in presence of Derek Hopwood who was president between 1980 and 1990. During the following decades, that is until 2008, other scholar librarians, specialists of the Middle East such as Jan Just Witkam (Leiden University), Frédéric Bauden (Université de Liège), Arnoud Vrolijk (Leiden University) have successfully chaired the committee. At present the head of the organisation is Helga Rebhan, in charge of the Oriental and East Asian Department at the Bavarian State Library of Munich. The Board of MELCom International includes a secretary, myself (Paris) and a treasurer (Mastan Ebtehaj, Oxford), each of whom holds a post in a different European country according to the committee's constitution.

MELCom International, the European Association of Middle East Librarians, is a non-governmental organization, devoted to promoting co-operation among individuals and institutions in Europe, the Middle East and throughout the world concerned with all aspects of Middle East librarianship, book collecting, the book trade and publishing. The Middle East has been defined for this purpose as meaning the Arab world, Turkey, Cyprus, Israel (but excluding Hebraica and Judaica), Iran, Afghanistan and the Muslim and Turkic peoples of the former Soviet Union.

Even if the main function of MELCom International has been to provide a forum for personal contact, discussion and exchange of information and ideas among European Middle East library specialists, bibliographers and publishers, a three-day conference is regularly held, serving as a more formal platform for the professional experiences. MELCom International tries to achieve these aims in an atmosphere that is both scientific and informal.

The yearly three day conference takes place in a different country every year and whenever possible takes turns between Europe and the area under study*. Recently, in 2006, it was organized in Istanbul and was hosted by the Ottoman Bank Research Center and Archives. Traditionally the conference presentations cover topics that vary from manuscript and rare books to collection development policies, from library history to new technologies and the three-day programme

includes visits to local libraries and documentation centers. Papers may be presented either in English or in French, the two official languages of MELCom International.*

Although there are regular participants to MELCom International, there is no formal membership structure. Attendees are of course librarians and archivists but also researchers and information officers, bibliographers, booksellers, bibliophiles and anyone interested in information sources concerning the Middle Eastern studies from all over the world. So far we have had colleagues from Algeria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Indonesia, Iraq, Iran, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, The Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Switzerland, Tatarstan, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, United States...

The next two conferences will take place in Kazan, Republic of Tatarstan (22-25 June 2009) and the following spring in Cordoba, Spain.

Those who are interested in joining us in Kazan are invited to visit the Committee's website where a first circular and a call for papers will be posted by mid December 2008. Alternately, it is recommended to subscribe to a professional discussion list which deals with matters related to Middle Eastern studies only (including librarianship) and administered by the present chair of MELCom UK, Paul Auchterlonie of the University of Exeter Library.*

We look forward to having more participation from Turkey and to seeing our Turkish colleagues with us.

* More information on past conferences and their programmes (past conferences), on how to subscribe to the professional discussion list (useful links) and on the upcoming conferences may be found: <http://www.sant.ox.ac.uk/ext/melcomintl/index.shtml>