



MELCom International 36th annual conference

Sakıp Sabancı Müzesi in Istanbul, 26-29th May 2014

Conference Report & Business Meeting Minutes

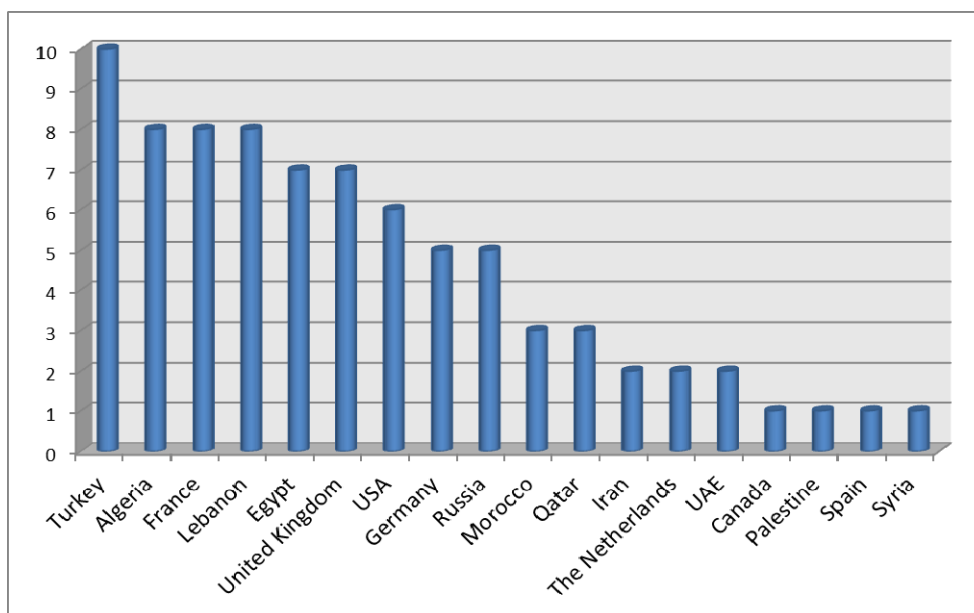


Conference Report

The thirty-sixth annual conference of the MELCom International was held in the Sakıp Sabancı Müzesi. It would have been the third time since the inception of the association, that the MELCom International gathered in Istanbul, the first time was in 1990 and the second in 2006, and that is a strong signal of the durable and affectionate bond that links MELCom International with this city and the friends and colleagues who work and live there.

It was convened by Prof. Zeren Tanındı, Professor at the Uludağ University and Sabancı University, and Head Curator at Sakıp Sabancı Museum and Ayşe Kilercik Aldemir, Curator at the Sakıp Sabancı Museum.

The conference attracted a large crowd of professionals: 78 registered persons came from 18 different countries of work, 7 of who were commercial attendees and 9 students. Another 5 local colleagues joined the conference ad-hoc (See the following graph for details of those countries and number of attendees by countries).



The scientific programme included twenty-eight presentations, six of which were in French. The papers revolved around the following themes:

- Developing Middle Eastern Collections: what is at stake?
- Institutions & Collections : history and management
- Manuscripts collections: description, edition and digitization projects
- Digital resources and projects : aims and methods
- Cataloguing practices and collections development policies

This year a shorter new format (15 minutes presentation slot instead of 30 minutes, Q&A included) was introduced to manage the extra-ordinary amount of proposals received and accepted. One paper was cancelled at the last minute due to unforeseen events.

This year a strong accent was applied to the concept and practicalities of Middle Eastern librarianship as well as the various digitisation and valorisation projects of manuscript collections across the globe. The presentations covered a wide-range of countries and periods, taking us on a panoramic tour of the Islamic, Arabic, Persian, Ottoman and modern Turkish collections and projects associated with them in Great-Britain, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Spain, Turkey , Algeria, Palestine, Egypt, Lebanon, Russia and the USA.

Our hosts gave us a guided tour of the amazing Sakıp Sabancı’s building and collections, including their amazing permanent exhibition on calligraphic art. A fascinating temporary exhibition on Ottoman –Polish relations over the last 300 years was also concurrently held at the Museum and was opened to the conference attendees.

Two visits were offered on Tuesday afternoon, delegates could sign up and attend one of them: One saw us around the Istanbul University Rare books Library (including the Library of Sultan Abdul Hamid II), followed by an impromptu tour of the Istanbul Grand Bazaar.

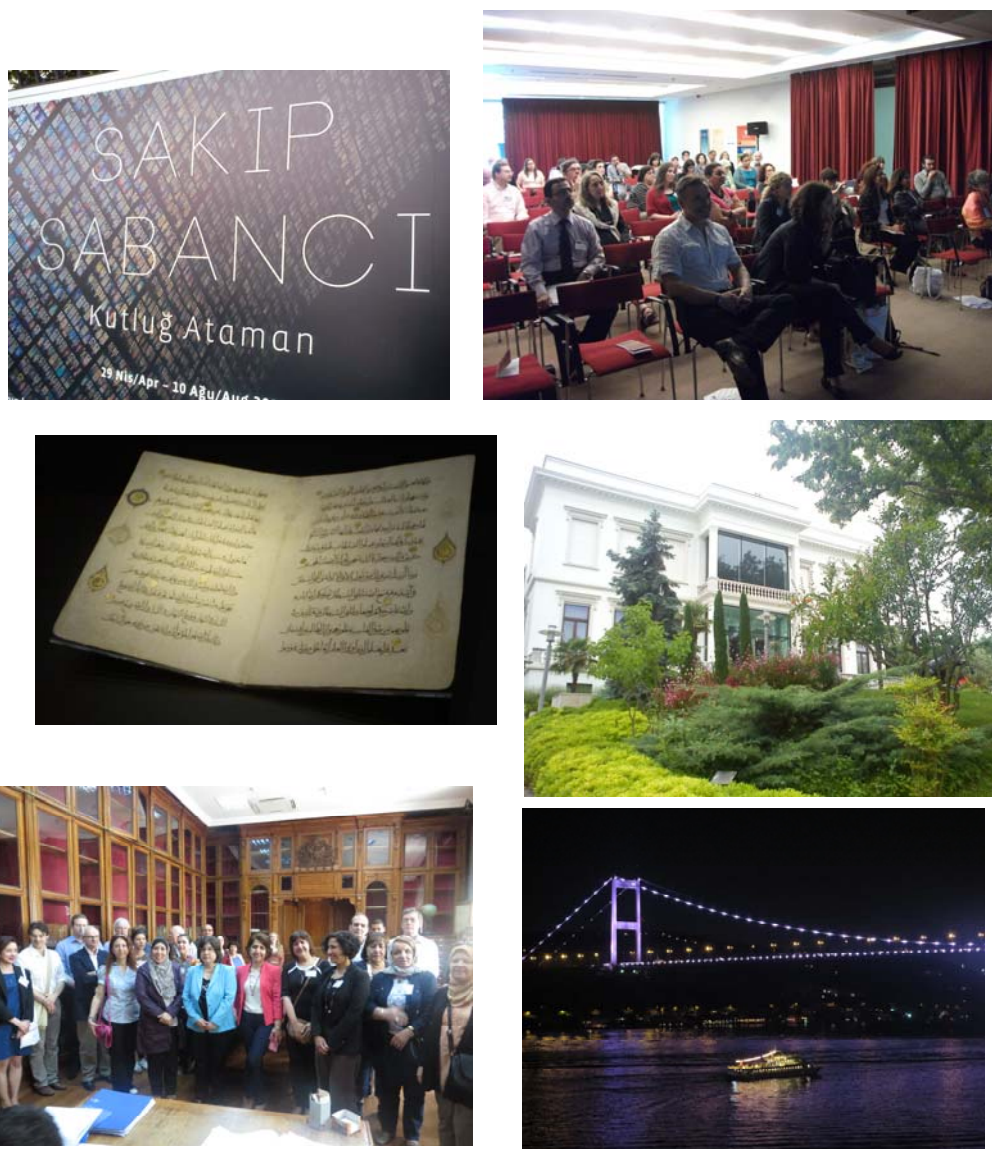
The other group was led through a private visit of the Topkapı Saray Museum libraries, which had been opened exceptionally for them on that day.

The traditional dinner was held on the open terrace of Hotel Armada in Istanbul Old City, giving diners a breath-taking views of the Bosphorus on one side and on the inland side, the Blue Mosque and Hagia Sophia seemingly floating just above.

The conference concluded as usual with a business meeting on Wednesday afternoon, whose minutes are to be found below.

The conference was followed by an excursion on Thursday 29th May, which consisted in an excursion to Bursa, the first capital of the Ottoman Empire (and resting place of the first Ottoman sultans Osman Gazi and Orhan Gazi). Bursa is located in northwestern Anatolia, within the Marmara Region and is also renowned for its silk market with its mesmerizing wares and enchanting architecture. The group was treated to a ferry journey across the Sea of Marmara on our way and back from there.

For illustration purposes, please find a few pictures of the conference below.





36th MI Business Meeting

Agenda/ Ordre du jour:

- 1. President's assessment of the conference (Helga Rebhan)**
- 2. Secretary's report (D. Akhoun-Schwarb)**
- 3. Treasurer's report (Farzaneh Zareie)**
- 4. MI Website (Sara Yontan & David Musnik, Webmasters)**
- 5. Elections**
- 6. Grants Policy**
- 7. Future conferences**
- 8. Professional announcements**
- 9. Any Other Business**

Minutes of the Business meeting held on Wednesday, 28th May 2014, at the Sakıp Sabancı Müzesi in Istanbul

1. President's assessment of the conference (Helga Rebhan)

President Helga Rebhan that this conference has been a very successful one: she commended the speakers for their thought-provoking and informative contributions during the three days of the conference about the most diverse aspects of libraries and the information society, and of course about special collections in Turkey and elsewhere, mirroring the organisation's active professional life. That it was held in the most beautiful settings only added to the overall success of this conference. She was pleased by the fruitful discussions and further networking opportunities that this conference offered to many – indeed all the participants.

She warmly thanked Dr. Nazan Ölçer, Director of Sabancı University Sakıp Sabancı Museum, for generously hosting the MI conference in the exquisite buildings of their Museum and providing the most lavish catering; the organisers Dr Zeren Tanındı and Ayşe Kilercik Aldemir for their excellent organisation of this conference, providing a marvellous side programme and organising a much anticipated excursion to Bursa.

President Helga Rebhan extended her thanks to the Secretary and Treasurer for all their work behind the scene, as well as to the MI webmasters Sara Yontan and David Musnik who, acting on the suggestions made to them at the previous conference, have continued to improve the website both in its functionalities and content-wise, by collecting and added many links useful for Middle East librarianship.

2. Secretary's report (Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb)

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb thanked Dr Zeren Tanındı, Ayşe Kilercik Aldemir and their colleagues for all their work and the very pleasant collaboration towards the organisation of this conference, in the most elegant fashion.

See Conference Report above.

Publication of papers

Finally, she asked the speakers to send in their papers in electronic format (Word, Powerpoint, PDF, etc.) to melcom.international@gmail.com in order to have them posted on the website and gave September as a reasonable « deadline ». Those submitting their presentation should make sure to add some explanatory text if they choose to send their presentations slides.

Pictures of the conference

Dominique A-S. also asked attendees who wished to share their pictures of the conference on the website to send them to her (melcom.international@gmail.com) or directly to the MI webmasters (sarayontan@gmail.com) .

Discussion list

She also urged everyone to subscribe to the group list “lis-middle-east” (and advertise it to colleagues) in order to be informed of the annual conferences, among other information on MI. She reminded that people can also refer to the MI website, which will host all information regarding the association’s activities.

3. Treasurer’s report (Farzaneh Zareie)

Farzaneh Zareie, the Treasurer of MI, gave some figures concerning the financial report.

The balance brought forward on the MELCom International account on 3rd January 2014 was **€7240**. / Au 3 janvier 2014 le solde du compte MELCom International était créditeur de 7240 €.

The following is a short account of the conference collected fees, expenses that MI had to bear, and the amount to carry forward.

Income = 2500 €

The current conference received 80 participants among which 7 were from the publishing sector, and 13 were registered as students or guests (free).

Expenses = ca. 2710 €

The conference had to bear the following expenses:

- a. 5 grants : €2,250
- b. miscellaneous expenses (account maintenance; website hosting costs; guests at the conference dinner; etc.) : ca. €460

There was a negative balance of -200 Euros this year. The balance brought forward as of 28th May 2014 is **ca. € 7,030**.

7,240 €	(balance brought forward on 03/01/2014)
+ 2,500 €	(conference fees collected for Istanbul on 26/05/14)
- 2,710 €	(expenses for year 2013-2014)
7,030 €	(balance brought forward on 28/05/2014)

4. MI Website (Sara Yontan & David Musnik, Webmasters)

Sara Yontan, with the help of David Musnik who has conceived it technically, have substantially developed the new MI website and integrated the suggestions given at the last conference in Moscow, such as the different tabs on the homepage. The webmarks section were expanded with the significant addition of a page on Early Arabic prints collections, a much developed section on digitized manuscripts collections worldwide, and a new section on publishers, booksellers and vendors supplying Middle Eastern material to libraries.

Sara presented the website briefly to the attendees and appealed to their contributions for the “webmarks”.

She also reminded everyone to keep an eye on the MI website where announcements concerning MELCom International are to be posted: www.melcominternational.org

The attendees were then asked to make remarks and suggestions concerning the website. Some of the suggestions were as follows:

[Sara Yontan \(Paris\)](#), seconded by [Andreas Drechsler \(Bamberg\)](#) suggested to add a tab under the “Professionals” page, that would be dedicated to promote information about Middle Eastern vendors among librarians. [John Eilts \(Stanford\)](#) mentioned the existence of a “vendors discussion list”, that is a branch out from the MELANET discussion list, only opened to librarians, where substantiated comments are allowed. [Sara Yontan](#) asked to link it to the MELCom International Website. [Yasmin Faghihi \(Cambridge\)](#) asked about the format of submission of such information regarding vendors. Sara Yontan confirmed that it should be fairly neutral, including name, website links and description of products and services provided. No derogatory comments permitted of course.

[Helga Rebhan \(Munich\)](#) suggested another subtag under “Professionals” page to announce other workshops, conferences, etc. all events related to the Middle Eastern librarianship. [Sara Yontan](#) asked anyone organising or knowing about such events to relay the information to her so she could mount it there.

[Hala Kaileh \(Ramallah\)](#) wished to see a wider representation of countries covered on the website. [Sara Yontan](#) said this very much depended on crowd-sourcing and she urged people to send links to her.

[Muneer Abu Baker \(Dubai\)](#) suggested the MI hire professional photographers to fill out the MI website. [Sara Yontan](#) said that group pictures of the past conferences were already available under each past conference page and the Secretary was organising albums for the private usage of the MI conferences’ attendees. [Yasmin Faghihi](#) said that the convenor should make sure to organise a group picture during the conference.

5. Elections

- Secretary and Treasurer: both posts have seen the end of their first mandate. Helga Rebhan nominated both current post-holders, respectively Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb and Farzaneh Zareie, and both having agreed to continue their work, an open vote from the assembly has seen their mandate extended for another 3 years (till and including the 2017 conference).

- MI presidency: Helga Rebhan's second term has come to an end and in absence of other nominated candidate, she offered her availability for a third term if the assembly agreed. She was nominated by Sara Yontan to carry on a third mandate, with the caveat that she might resign from that position before the end of term (Summer 2017) if a candidate comes forward in the meantime. An open vote saw Helga Rebhan re-elected by majority of attendees for a third conditional mandate.

6. Grants Policy

As quite many were not able to join us in Moscow, Helga Rebhan gave the assembly an overview on what had been agreed in Moscow.

There has agreed to introduce some rules for our grants' business which has become part of our annual conferences, in the aim of - not adding more bureaucracy – but rather introduce more transparency and fairness in the attribution of grants which are financed either by third party funds or the conference fees.

A list of the previous grantees was compiled, detailing the conference year for which a stipend was allocated to them, the origin of the fund and the amount allocated.

Then, at the Board's request Sara Yontan drafted a grants policy. This new grant's scheme is currently being reviewed by the Board and the Grants Committee and once all parties are satisfied with it, it would be published on the MELCom International website.

7. Future conferences

2015 : Prof. Nadjia Gamouh & Prof. Azzedine Bouderbane offered to host the 37th MELCom International at their home institution, the **Institute of Library Science Research Laboratory (NTIRDN)** at the **University of Constantine, Algeria** which will be the "Capital of the Arab Culture" in 2015. (<http://www.univ-constantine2.dz/>)

University Mentouri Constantine was founded in June 1969. In December 2011, it was divided into 3 independent universities. The University of Constantine 2 includes the following faculties and institutes: Faculty of economics, commerce and management, Faculty of human and social sciences, Faculty of psychology and education, Faculty of new technologies for information and communication, Institute of sport and Institute of Library science.

The dates for the 37th MELCom International are 28th-30th April 2015 (with an excursion taking place on Friday 1st May 2015).

Helga Rebhan thanked this institution and their representatives for the invitation. She reminded the future hosts that official letters of intention are to be addressed from institution officials to the MI presidency, confirming these invitations.

8. Professional Announcements

[Davidson MaClaren \(TIMA, Cambridge, UK\)](#) announced that it will be the Tenth Anniversary of the Islamic Manuscript Association this year. He went on to announce the forthcoming 10th TIMA conference, which will be held on 31 August-2 September 2014, in Magdalene College, University of Cambridge. The theme of this conference will be "manuscripts and conflicts" with an optional spe-

cial programme on 3 September 2014, including a workshop on Disaster Planning for Islamic Manuscript Collections.

TIMA was also organising a five-day workshop entitled “*Traditions of Papermaking in the Islamic World*” that will be hosted by the British Library in London on 23-27 March 2015.

[Arnoud Vrolijk \(Leiden University Library, NL\)](#) stated that this year Leiden University was celebrating its 400th anniversary. To this occasion Arnoud announced the publication of a celebratory volume entitled “*Arabic Studies in the Netherlands: A Short History in Portraits, 1580-1950*”, authored by Arnoud Vrolijk, Leiden University and Richard van Leeuwen, University of Amsterdam and published by Brill in 2014. This book retraces the history of Arabic and Oriental studies in the Netherlands and beyond from the early modern period onwards, supported with more than 110 colour illustrations from the Leiden Oriental collections.

9. Any Other Business

[Andreas Drechsler \(Bamberg University Library, Germany\)](#) highlighted the grants that the MELCom International allocated this year again, allowing no less than five speakers to attend the conference. He went on to question the MI policy about no-show as two speakers failed to turn up this year, without prior notice. [The MI Secretary](#) confirmed there was no policy in place regarding no-show, but she insisted that contingencies are part of any conference, and as a whole, MI speakers tended to be rather engaged and reliable, with rare occurrences of no-shows, so the Board does not feel the necessity to develop stricter rules at this point.

[Muneer Abu Baker \(Zayed University Library, UAE\)](#) made the following remarks and suggestions on the conference:

1. There should be a deadline for submitting abstracts.
2. Full papers should be submitted beforehand.
3. Papers delivered in French should be translated into English.
4. Introduce a reward for the best paper.

[The MI Board](#) took those suggestions on board and will give them consideration over the organisation of the future conferences.

[Yasmin Faghihi \(Cambridge University Library, UK\)](#) suggested speakers submit a short biography with their paper proposal, so they can be presented more thoroughly during the conference.

The Business meeting was then concluded with reiterated thanks from the board of the MI to all attendees for their excellent participation in this 36th conference, and their expressed wishes to see them all again in Constantine next year.
