MELA/MELCom International Joint Annual Conference

25-27 January 2026, The American University in Cairo

Day 1, 25 January, Sunday

08:30 - 9:00	Arrival & Registration
09:00 - 9:50	Refreshments [Location: Moataz El Alfi Hall]
10:00 - 10:30	**Opening Remarks & Welcome** **[Location: Moataz El Alfi Hall]**
	President of the American University in Cairo, Dr. Ahmad Dallal Dean of Libraries and Learning Technologies, Lamia Eid President of the Middle East Librarians Association (MELA), Dr. Dale J. Correa President of the Middle East Librarians Committee (MELCom International), Dr. Andreas Drechsler
10:30 - 12:00	**Collaborative initiatives across institutions and borders I** **[Location: Moataz El Alfi Hall; Chair: Andreas Drechsler]**
	1. Felix Wiedemann (Bavarian State Library, Munich), “A Network-Focused Overview of MELCom Conference History” 2. Ola Essam and Nahla El-Haddad (Women and Memory Forum), “WMF's Library Physical & Digital Collaborations” 3. Ali Mir-Ansari and Mohammad Emami (Oxford University), “Nizami Ganjahʾi Manuscripts Union Catalogue and Database (NGUC) Project”
12:00 - 12:30	Vendor presentations: Naseej / Kezana (2 x 15 mins)
12:30 - 13:30	Group photo & Lunch
13:30 - 15:00	**Collaborative initiatives across institutions and borders II** **[Location: Moataz El Alfi Hall; Chair: Rustin Zarkar]**
	4. Malak Faragallah (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in Egypt) and Vanessa Desclaux (Bibliothèque nationale de France), “The Collection of Coptic *katameros* (lectionnaries) in the French National Library” 5. Stephen Urgola, Amr Omar, Irina Schmid (AUC), “The Maktabat al-Khanji Collection: A Multi- and Intra- Institutional Collaboration”

	6. Joel László (Basel University Library), “Three Swiss Architects in Afghanistan 1939-1945: Entangling an entangled history further through digitizing their visual legacies”
15:00 - 16:30	**Preservation of rare materials and manuscripts** **[Location: Moataz El Alfi Hall; Chair: Michael Erdman]**
	7. Akram Habibulla (Indiana University, Bloomington), “Some Islamic Manuscripts of Central Asian Origin in U.S. Libraries” 8. Cihan Kalin (Istanbul University), “İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal and his Precious Collection” 9. Mohamed Abdel Rahman (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, Egypt), “Exploring the Unpublished Archive of the Comité de Conservation des Monuments”
17:00 - 18:00	**Networking and Reception by AUC**

Day 2, 26 January, Monday

09:00 - 09:30	Registration & Refreshments	
09:30 - 11:00	**Historical perspectives on Middle East librarianship [Location : Mary Cross Hall; Chair: Yasmin Faghihi]**	**Impact of political events on collecting and access [Location: Shafik Gabr Hall; Chair : Stephen Urgola]**
	10. Rania El-Kanj (AUB), “From Beirut, a Renaissance: AUB and the Future of Nahda Studies” 11. Ioana Feodorov (TYPARABIC Project/Romanian Academy), “A Newly Discovered Mid-18th Century Arabic Printing Press at the Monastery of St Spyridon in Bucharest” 12. Fatima Kadic (University of Sarajevo), “Middle East Book Collections in Bosnia”	13. Amy Andres (Virginia Commonwealth University School of the Arts in Qatar), “From Bill of Rights to Local Rights: Navigating Palestine Solidarity and DEI in an Academic Library” 14. Yuta Hayashi and Miki Nose (Institute of Developing Economies, Japan), “Preservation and Digitalization of Materials for Conflict Areas: A Case Study on Lebanese Maps in the Period Around Independence” 15. Marina Wondrich (Kurdistan Center for Arts and Culture), “Unifying a Dispersed Archive: The KCAC Archive and the Future of Kurdish Collections”
11:00 - 11:30	Refreshment Break	
11:30 - 12:30	**Community engagement and outreach I [Location : Mary Cross Hall; Chair: Walid Ghali]**	**Training the next generation of Middle East librarians [Location: Shafik Gabr Hall; Chair: Lydia Wright]**
	16. Sohaib Baig (UCLA), “L.A. Stories: Engaging Muslim Communities in Southern California with Islamic Manuscripts” 17. Omayma Shafy (Wekalet Benha), إعادة تصور الأرشيف من خلال المجتمع: أرشيف بهنا والحفاظ على التراث السينمائي المصري	18. Leo Wittmann (Bamberg University Library/Bavarian State Library Munich), “Librarians on the Road: An Experience Report” 19. Rania Osman (Bibliotheca Alexandrina), “The Strategic Training needs of the Middle East Librarians in the AI Era”
12:30 - 13:00	Vendor presentations: Clarivate / Leila Books (2 x 15 mins)	
13:00 - 14:00	Lunch	
14:00 - 15:30	**Evolution of collection development practices I [Location : Mary Cross Hall; Chair: Christoph Rauch]**	**Challenges in cataloging and metadata for multilingual collections [Location: Shafik Gabr Hall; Chair: Heather Hughes]**
	20. Michael Erdman (The British Library), “Completing the Circle: The Challenges and Opportunities of Creating a Handlist for the British Library”	23. Walid Ghali (The Aga Khan University), “An Egyptian Pioneer on Fatimid Studies and his Ambiguous Authority Record”

	21. Ryan Zohar (Georgetown University), “Assessing the Value of Area Studies Print Resources in the Digital Age” 22. Guy Burak (New York University),” Tracing and Collecting Publisher Catalogs from the Middle East”	24. Ahmad Khan and 'Abd al-'Ati al-Sharqawi (AUC/Mu'assasat al-'Ilm li-Ihya al-Turath wa-l-Khidmat al-Raqmiyya), “The Challenges of Cataloguing and Metadata for Two Million Manuscripts” 25. Amira Gamal (American Research Center in Egypt), “From Shelves to Digital Portals: Cataloging, Data Quality, and User-Centered Library Services at ARCE”
15:30 - 16:00	Refreshment Break	
16:00 - 17:30	**Evolution of collection development practices II [Location : Mary Cross Hall; Chair: Susanne Saker]**	**Digital humanities and Middle Eastern studies [Location: Shafik Gabr Hall; Chair: Mark Muehlhaeusler]**
	26. Peter Magierski (Columbia University), “Reuniting a Dispersed Legacy: The Said Nafisi Collection of Persian Lithographs” 27. Anne-Sylvie Cathelineau (Université Sorbonne Nouvelle), “Les collections arabes et hébraïques à l'épreuve de la mutualisation” 28. Yasmin Shafei (CEDEJ), “Historians at the Threshold: Archival Access and the Politics of Memory in Modern Egypt”	29. Said Badawi (Palestinian National Library), أراشيف رقمية لفلسطين: الذاكرة والمعرفة في سياق الإنسانيات الرقمية 30. Yasmin Faghihi (Cambridge University Library), “Provenance Brings History to Life - The Private Collection of E.G. Browne at Cambridge University” 31. MariaLuisa Langella (AMU Aix-Marseille Université - CNRS), “The Arsène Roux Collection in Aix en Provence: From Codicology to HTR”

Day 3, 27 January, Tuesday

09:30 - 10:00	Refreshments
10:00 - 12:00	**Emerging technologies and their application in Middle Eastern collections** **[Location : Mary Cross Hall; Chair: Guy Burak]**
	32. Mahdi Ganjavi (University of Toronto), “Critical AI Integration for Cataloging Marginalized Middle Eastern Histories” 33. Liya Louis & Amy Andres (Virginia Commonwealth University in Qatar), “AI-Driven Metadata: Solving Cataloguing Challenges in Diverse and Multilingual Collections Using GenAI” 34. Mohamed Elzalabany (Independent consultant), “Evaluating AI Prompting Approaches for Arabic Metadata Creation” 35. Christoph Rauch (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin - PK), “Material Analysis and Advanced Codicology - New Requirements for Manuscript Libraries”
12:00 - 12:30	Vendor presentations: EBSCO / Libra Books & Publishing (2 x 15 min)
12:30 - 13:30	Lunch
13:30 - 15:00	**Panel - Archival practices and the preservation of community memory** **[Location : Mary Cross Hall; Chair: Dale J. Correa]**
	36. Zeynab Nemr (AUB), “Ecological Archivists of War: Community Documentation and the Preservation of Land Memory in the Levant” 37. Ghada Dimashk (AUB), “The Upside-Down Archives World: Between Preservation and Destruction in Middle East Librarianship” 38. Brad Bauer (New York University Abu Dhabi Library), “Is there a Place (and Space) for Archival Programs at Universities in the MENA Region?”
15:00 - 15:30	Refreshment Break
15:30 - 16:30	**Middle East collection development reports** **[Location : Mary Cross Hall; Chair: William Kopycki]**
	TBC
16:30 - 17:00	**MELA and MELCom announcements (MI 2027) and closing remarks** **[Location : Mary Cross Hall]**
17:30-18:00	Assembly of participants to Gala Dinner
18:00 - 20:00	Gala Dinner