MELCom International's 2025 conference took place in Paris, at the new Sorbonne-Nouvelle campus in Nation, in the 12th arrondissement.

Day 1

The conference started with a session focused on French institutions, namely the Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme, the Humathèque Condorcet, and the BULAC. Scholars and librarians from each of these institutions gave us an overview of their collections, focusing on those especially relevant to scholars of the Middle East.

The second session was themed around collection development. My own presentation laid out the process of developing a collection policy for CEDEJ's library, while my colleagues from Lahore University of Management Sciences relayed their experience with a major donation, focusing on its acquisition and cataloguing.

Due to technical issues, the presentation from Emory University was folded into session 3, and focused on the development of diverse and inclusive collections, with examples drawn from programming exhibitions and events at the university. The rest of the session was centred on community heritage preservation and therefore archival projects. Ghada Dimashk, on behalf of Jamila Ghaddar, presented the Fighting Erasure project, a major digital project documenting the genocide in Gaza and aiming to preserve Palestinian cultural heritage. This was followed by Heather Hughes' talk about publications by the Greater Japan Islam League, an association of the Tatar community in Japan during the interwar period. Finally, Aly Rattansi presented his project documenting print materials, including periodicals and da'wa materials, published by the Muslim community in Canada, through the Muslims in Canada Archives.

Following these three sessions, Anne-Sylvie Cathelineau took us on an informative tour of the Sorbonne-Nouvelle's new campus, showing off their recording studio, stage, film theatre, and of course, the library. Finally, we capped the day off with a reception in the same building.

Day 2

The second day started off with a session about historic collections, where Astrid Menz and Fayek Abbas spoke about Fritz Krenkow's collection, which the Hamburg University Library tracked down and integrated into their catalogue with (visible and searchable) provenance notes. Next, Robin Dougherty gave a fascinating exposé of the life and works of Carlo Landberg, a Swedish-born manuscript and artifact dealer cum pirate/looter, whose collection has ended up at Yale University. Rather than Stephane Ipert, the session's last presentation was given by Christoph Rauch, who walked us through the Berlin State Library's manuscript collection, its provenance, acquisition policy, and usage. Before breaking for lunch, we attended a brief presentation of Libra Kitap, an Istanbul-based publishing house.

After lunch was session 5, on manuscript collections. Vanessa Desclaux spoke of the BNF's Syriac manuscripts, emphasising their provenance. Mehlé Pehlivanian took us back to the Berlin State Library, this time focusing on manuscripts in the extinct Armeno-Turkish dialect, most of them originating in Istanbul. In the only French-language presentation of this conference, Karam El Hoyek gave an overview of the Bibliothèque

Orientale's manuscript collection, walking us through the library's history, as well as speaking briefly on the repercussions of the Beirut port explosion of 2020.
The Qatar National Library-sponsored session was a highly technical one, focusing on manuscript preservation techniques. Starting us off, Shaikha Alkharsan detailed the different types of botanical dyes found in islamic manuscripts. Nil Baydar then explained how a certain combination of dyed paper and iron-gall ink led to corrosion in Mamluk manuscripts; such corrosion is not reversible, but the contents of the manuscripts can be recovered through the use of infrared imaging for digital restoration. Finally, Maxim Nasra gave us an overview of a research project concerning islamic manuscripts produced outside Europe, examining ink and pigment degradation, including through the recreation of iron-gall and verdigris ink and experimental reconstruction of the aging these materials undergo.
The day ended with a presentation of Muteferriqa, an online database using analytical AI to improve text search in Ottoman manuscripts, followed by a visit to the Institut du Monde Arabe, and finally the conference dinner at L'Atlas.

Day 3

The last day of the conference kicked off with session 7, "LIS Matters". Farah Zahra (who had just defended her ethnomusicology PhD) and Olga Andriyanova presented the collaboration project between the Institut du Monde Arabe and Répertoire International de Littérature Musicale, which focuses on highlighting IMA's Arab music collection. Afterwards, Mustafa Hasanali Akay explained the motivations and goals behind his project to rewrite the entirety of KKX call numbers in the Library of Congress classification system, in order to account for Turkish law. Finally, Rustin Zarkar gave a quick presentation of the Library of Congress's Cairo Overseas Office's acquisitions this year.
In the intermediary sponsor session, Eastview gave an overview of their holdings.
Once again, technical issues displaced a presentation, and session 8 opened with Adam Volker's explanation of the challenges in using OCR/HTR for non-Lation scripts, offering a comparison of free open-source software as well as commercial products. Eman Shahin then showed us how the British International Research Institutes use Linked Open Data principles to engage in archival storytelling, through a shared digital archives portal.
After a short break, Mark Muehlhaeusler was able to connect from the American University in Cairo, to talk to us about their use of library internships for computer science and engineering students to improve their digital tools.
In the very last session, Julie Lowe walked us through her teaching strategies in the LIS classroom, touching on issues of diversity and representation. Finally, Felix Wiedemann offered us a look back at the history of MELCom conferences, through statistics he's compiled from conference programs on the organisation's website, drawing correlations and highlighting trends.
The day ended with the business meeting. The question of the conference's hybrid format was raised, given frequent technical issues; the consensus, however, was to keep the format and try to improve on it. We were then treated to a rundown of the numbers from this conference; 85 participants from 18 countries, and 30

presentations. Finally, plans to hold the next edition in Cairo, in conjunction with MELA's annual meeting, in January 2026 were announced, followed by tentative plans to hold the 2027 conference in Istanbul.