



## **MELCom International 35<sup>th</sup> annual conference**

### **Minutes of the Business meeting held on**

**Wednesday, 29<sup>th</sup> May 2013, at the VGBIL in Moscow**

#### **Agenda/ Ordre du jour:**

1. **Apologies**
2. **Assessment of the conference (Helga Rebhan, President) & Secretary's report (D. Akhoun-Schwarb, Secretary)**
3. **Financial report (Farzaneh Zareie, Treasurer)**
4. **MI Grants Policy (Helga Rebhan)**
5. **Future conferences**
6. **MI Website (Sara Yontan, Webmaster)**
7. **Professional Announcements**
8. **Any Other Business**

#### **1. Apologies**

Ayse Aldemir Kilercik (Turkey), Kevork Bardakjian (USA), Elizabeth Beaudin (USA), Nouzha Bensaadoun (Morocco), Alfrid Bustanov (Netherlands), Marie Chahwan (Lebanon), Basma Chebani (Lebanon), Bilel Hadjar (Algeria), Mahboubeh Kamalpour (Australia), Akram Khabibullaev (USA), Fadia Khairallah (Lebanon), Liubov Kryakina (Russia), MariaLuisa Langella (UK), Suzanne Saker (Germany), Ann Swallow (UAE), Zeren Tanindi (Turkey), Arnoud Vrolijk (Netherlands), Jan-Just Witkam (Netherlands), Asim Zubčević (Bosnia).

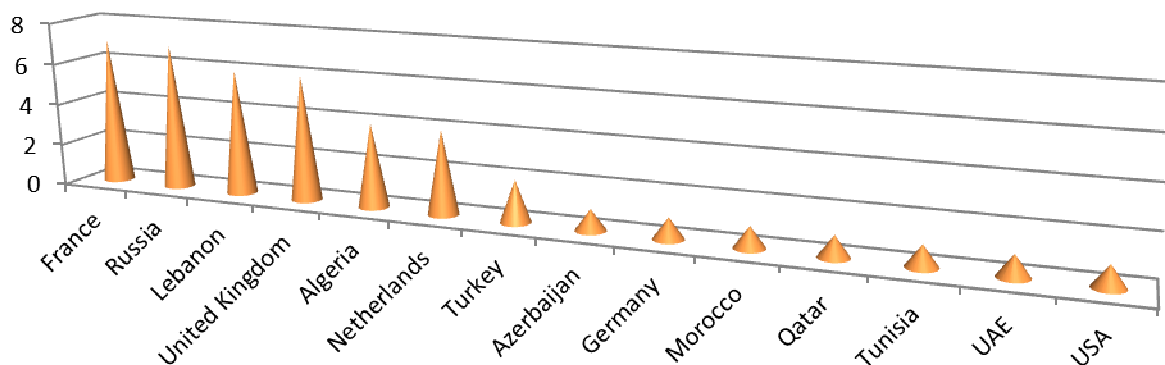
#### **2. Assessment of the conference (Helga Rebhan)**

##### **& Secretary's Report (Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb)**

President Helga Rebhan thanked all the speakers for their excellent and stimulating contributions during the three days of the conference, and thanked the Director of the VGBIL Ms Genieva for generously hosting the MI conference in her impressive library.

President Rebhan commended the commitment and endeavour as well as the great professional knowledge of Ilya Zaytsev for the excellent organisation of this conference, both the scientific part and the side programme. She also expressed her gratitude to him and all his colleagues at the International Office, the Mardjani Foundation and the Azerbaijani Centre for their extraordinary efforts to smooth out all the difficulties for the conference attendees and make this conference a wonderfully unique experience.

Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb thanked Ilya Zaytsev and his colleagues for all their work and collaboration towards the organisation of the conference. She commented on the smaller number of attendees compared to previous years (various reasons were invoked; the economic crisis and the budget cuts in a number of our institutions being one of the most cited ones unfortunately). We missed our colleagues but our reduced number actually fostered a pleasantly cosy atmosphere and allowed more opportunities for in-depth discussions between attendees. She gave then a brief report on the conference, which saw 43 attendees coming from 14 countries of work (see graph below for details of those countries).



21 papers were presented on the following themes:

- 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

Dominique commented on the fact that MI has traditionally welcomed and will continue to welcome contributions on manuscripts and collections of manuscripts, but was also very much looking forward to receiving more contributions in more “mundane” topics that constitute the majority of the everyday work in most of the MI members’ libraries, such as collection development policies, trends in acquisitions, bibliometrics, cataloguing issues, electronic publications in the Middle East, etc.

### ***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](mailto: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.

Dominique also conveyed the offer made by the Director of the VGBIL, Mrs Genieva, for the VGBL as a publishing house to publish the proceedings of this MI conference. It was suggested by Sara Yontan that we should not restrict ourselves to this year’s publications, but look back to previous

years as well in order to “plump up” that publication, but also as this is an excellent opportunity to publish previous papers that went unpublished so far by lack of opportunity and funds. An editor needs to be found to supervise the publication of such proceedings.

### ***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. Financial 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 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013 was 6420 €. / Au 1er janvier 2013 le solde du compte MELCom International était créditeur de 6420 €.

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

### **Income = 1535 €**

The current conference received 42 participants, out of which 2 were from the publishing sector, and 2 were registered as students or guests (free). The collected conference fee amounted to 1535 Euros in total.

### **Expenses = 645 €**

The conference had to bear the following expenses:

- a. grant : €500 ;
- b. miscellaneous expenses (account maintenance; website hosting costs; guests at the conference dinner; etc.) : €145

The amount of 890 € is carried over, after deducting the above incurred expenses. This is additional to the balance amount brought forward (which was 6420 €). Thus the balance brought forward on 20/09/13 is 7310 €.

6420 € (balance brought forward on 01/01/2013)  
1535 € (conference fees collected for Moscow)  
- 645 € (expenses)  
**7310 € (balance brought forward on 20/09/2013)**

#### **4. MI Grants Policy (Helga Rebhan)**

During the Kazan conference in 2009 the Board and the Grants Committee had decided to pursue a more transparent grant policy. Since then MI has been considering to introduce some rules with regard to this issue. This does not mean more bureaucracy; the aim is to be fair with the distribution of grants.

Indeed a web page has been devoted to this matter.

In the past, some grants were funded by third parties. For example in Beirut and Munich by the German Research Association, two years ago in Berlin they were sponsored by the Prussian Heritage Foundation. Usually though the stipends are financed by the conference fees. Therefore the members should be entitled to get information on the grants' policy and business. In order to begin with some changes we have compiled a list of the grantees, for which conference a stipend was allocated to them, by whom it was funded and which amount was given.

Sara Yontan kindly agreed to draft a scheme for our future grants' policy and to suggest the revised principles and improvements at our conference in 2014.

#### **5. Future conferences (Helga Rebhan)**

**2014** : Zeren Tanındı together with Ayşe Kilercik Aldemir, both representing the **Sakıp Sabancı Museum, Istanbul**, had invited MI for its 36<sup>th</sup> annual conference and Dr. Nazan Ölçer, Director of Sabancı Museum has since confirmed the invitation. (<http://muze.sabanciuniv.edu/>)

*Sabancı University's Sakıp Sabancı Museum is located in Emirgan, at one of Istanbul's oldest settlements on the Bosphorus. Today Sabancı University Sakıp Sabancı Museum presents a versatile museological environment with its rich permanent collection (where calligraphy, painting, archaeological and stone works, furniture and decorative arts are represented), the comprehensive temporary exhibitions that it hosts, its conservation units, model educational programs and the various concerts, conferences and seminars held there.*

The dates for the 36<sup>th</sup> MELCom International are 26<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> May 2014 (29<sup>th</sup> of May to be devoted to a professional excursion).

**2015:** In 2012 during the conference held in Paris, Philippe Chevrant had verbally extended an invitation to host the 37th MI annual conference at the **Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale in Cairo** (<http://www.ifao.egnet.net/>).

The following year, in Moscow, a competing invitation was issued by Dr Bouderbane to host the 37<sup>th</sup> MELCom International at his home institution, the **University of Constantine, Algeria** which will be the Cultural Capital of the Arab World in 2015.

A decision will be reached that will depend on a number of factors, among which the decision of Philippe Chevrant to whether or not withdraw his invitation, and the evolving political situation in Egypt.

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

## 6. MELCom International's website (Sara Yontan)

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 Paris, such as the design of the homepage. The webmarks section has been populated as well, thanks to the cooperation of Annick Bernard and Philippe Chevrant who manage the Liste Auteurs Arabes and to the regular contributions of Marie-Geneviève Guesdon for manuscripts.

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](http://www.melcominternational.org)

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

**Yasmin Faghihi:** create a category for manuscripts exclusively directly accessible from the MI website homepage, instead of having them buried within the list of webmarks.

**Nikolaj Serikoff:** creating another tab on the MI website homepage risks to clutter this one. The website's homepage should remain general and a search on Google would be able to retrieve deep links.

**Randa Al-Chidiac:** the term "webmarks" is misleading and should be changed by a term that would point to the contents more explicitly.

**Yasmin Faghihi:** add Arabic version of the logo on the website. [this has been declined by the Board as MI is an European Association that concerns itself with collections from the whole Middle East and Central Asia and could not favour one script/language of those regions over another.]

Sara Yontan assured that she will take all suggestions on board but she cannot guarantee to act on all of them, as she has to work within certain technical constraints.

## 7. Professional Announcements

**Sara Yontan (Bibliothèque nationale de France, France):**

The BnF (Paris) will no longer have a specific “oriental literature” section as of September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. This section (Service des Littératures orientales) which develops collections in Arabic, Hebrew, Turkish, Russian, Polish, Hungarian, Serbian, Czech, Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, Greek and languages of India, will merge with the “Foreign Literatures” section (Service des Littératures étrangères) devoted to collections in English, German, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, etc. The reason to this structural change is cutting down by half the amount of personnel that have managed these two separate units.

On the other hand the BnF maintains its section of Oriental manuscripts with specialists for the collections in Hebrew, Arabic, Turkish (part time), Chinese and Japanese.

**Marie-Geneviève Guesdon (Bibliothèque nationale de France, France):**

1) Segou Library has been digitized and completely mounted on Gallica.

This relates to the ‘Umari Library from Segou (Mali), a collection of African manuscripts received by the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in 1992. The microfilms of these manuscripts have been digitized and mounted on Gallica (<http://gallica.bnf.fr>). They are also accessible on the Archives and Manuscripts catalogue of the BnF : <http://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr/cdc.html> > Département des Manuscrits > Arabe > Manuscrits d'Afrique subsaharienne > Bibliothèque de Ségou.

2) Codicologica: launch of the completed project. Codicologica is an Arabic/French glossary for the description of manuscripts. It is accessible online at <http://codicologia.irht.cnrs.fr>

*“Ce glossaire, en grande partie inspiré du Vocabulaire codicologique de D. Muzerelle dont il reprend de nombreuses définitions, est destiné à fournir un instrument de travail aux catalogueurs de manuscrits arabes, arabophones et francophones. Son objectif est d’offrir un vocabulaire moderne de description des manuscrits. Ont donc été délibérément ignorés les termes employés par les auteurs anciens qui ne sont plus en usage aujourd’hui. »*

**Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb (MI secretary)** passed on the VGBIL project of hosting visiting scholars offered by Mrs Genieva.

**Yasmin Faghihi (Cambridge University Library, UK)**

1) Fihrist has a board of directors that is open to new members, just contact Fihrist: <http://www.fihrist.org.uk/>

2) Melcom UK summer meeting is taking place in Dublin at the Chester Beatty Library on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2013.

## 8. Any Other Business

Muneer Abu Baker (Zayed University, UAE) made the following remarks and suggestions on the conference:

- Papers' topics should be more balanced (in favour of non-manuscripts related issues).
- Speakers should submit papers 1 or 2 months in advance so they are ready for publication straight after their presentation.
- Technology should be updated in the host institution to allow a more efficient handling of the presentations.
- Obtaining a visa to Russia has been a struggle and ought to have been better organized.

Azzeddine Bouderbane (Constantine University, Algeria) suggested that we establish a reading/reviewing committee for editing the abstracts before their public release *[Note of the Board: A scientific committee does exist and it decides on the papers to be presented during the conferences. However it does not edit abstracts and papers to be mounted on the website. This remark will be discussed by the committee].*

Those remarks were commented by Nikolaj Serikoff (Wellcome Library, UK) who said that all was well and that we should not make changes.

The previous remarks were commented by Dominique Akhoun-Schwarb (MI Secretary) who stressed to all attendees that the organization and hosting of the MELCom International Annual conference were entirely down to the voluntary work of the local host and the MI Board, on top of their own other professional obligations, which means that we are all working under very tight constraints of time and resources. Furthermore, the MI has for aim not so much to be a glittering platform to show off our wares, but rather to be a convivial place where professionals managing Middle Eastern and Central Asian collections in Europe and the wider world can gather and exchange information on those collections and promote best practices. MI has been functioning in that spirit since its foundation 35 years ago, and the board is keen to see that friendly and rather informal spirit preserved for the years to come.

Yasmin Faghihi (Cambridge University Library, UK) suggested that the programme should allow for more time for discussion among attendees, by cutting down a few papers maybe. Also the programme should include some workshops on specific topics agreed in advance.

This remark was commented by Helga Rebhan (MI President) who said it would be difficult to accommodate more free time into the programme without diluting it, and that people are at leisure to make further contact with colleagues outside the presentations and visits hours.

Agnes Van Diepen (University of Amsterdam Library, Netherlands): asked fellow attendees for more information (pricing, licence usage, customers reviews, etc.) about the AskZad database.

**The Business meeting was then concluded with reiterated thanks from the board of the MI to all attendees for their participation in this 35<sup>th</sup> conference, and their expressed wishes to see them all again in Istanbul next year.**