

# FOCUS



## On the Center for Research Libraries:

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### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

## *Middle East Resources and Scholarship*

THIS ISSUE OF THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH LIBRARY'S NEWSLETTER focuses on the Middle East. We include here items of interest on the Arab Diaspora as well, such as the profile of Kansas State University professor Michael Suleiman's research on Arabs in America.

The people and politics of this turbulent part of the world have attracted new interest in the past decade. The recently intensified American engagement in the region and the new waves of Arab immigration to the U.S. in the 1990s have focused the attention of the scholarly and public policy worlds on countries like Syria, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, and Turkey. As a result, demand for primary source materials from the region have grown at Center-member universities.

Sadly, scholars are now discovering that many primary sources on the modern Middle East have disappeared, due to lack of scholarly interest early on. Fortunately, the Center has been building its research collections on the Middle East for 55 years. Through its Middle East Microform Program, the Center now possesses newspapers, documents, archives, books, and other primary source materials from the Middle East to support in-depth research on this region. Center collections are particularly rich in newspapers published in the region and in communities of the Arab Diaspora. As the list of recent acquisitions published in this issue attests, the Center is continuing to build its holdings for Middle East studies.



This ad from an April 10, 1948 edition of Sawt al-Ahrar, an Arab-American newspaper published in New York City, promotes a special edition of the Lebanese lottery to benefit the Arabs of Palestine. Readers were reminded of their religious obligation to help the less fortunate.

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Preserving important research materials, even in times when those materials are little used, is the purpose of the Center. Pursuit of this mission, although it defies short-term market economics, is essential to the long-term health of humanities and social science scholarship.

**Bernard F. Reilly, Jr.**  
*President*





## *The Middle East ~ New Acquisitions for 2004*

The Center's newly acquired runs of early 20th century Middle Eastern and Arab-American newspapers provide an extraordinary perspective into the early period of Middle Eastern immigration and settlement in the U.S. As a group these materials are only available at the Center and Library of Congress, and provide information from different geographic areas and different religious and cultural viewpoints.

The newly acquired newspapers supplement the Center's holdings of Meraat-ul-Gharb (hard copy, Sept. 5, 1917-1923; microfilm, 1924-Nov. 15, 1961) and Al-Hoda (1918-1948, incomplete)

### Arab-American Newspapers

*Al-Nasr* - (23 Feb. 1914-16 Jan. 1943), 45 reels

*Al-Ayam* - (New York, 13 Jan. 1898 - 17 May 1900), 1 reel

*Al-Bayan* - (New York, 24 Jan. 1911 - 31 July 1926; 25 Jan. 1938 - 31 Dec. 1938), 13 reels

*Al-Sayeh* - (New York, 23 April 1912-22 April 1929; 6 March 1930-19 Feb. 1931; 7 May 1926-6 May 1957), 39 reels

*Kawkeb America* - (New York, 15 April 1892-28 Feb. 1896), 1 reel

*Al-Kawn* - (New York, 3 Jan. 1907-23 Dec. 1909), 1 reel

### Additional Materials

*Creation of Modern Iraq*. India Great Britain, Public Record Office, India Office. Political and Secret Files, c. 1914-1921.

### Middle East ~ Recent Acquisitions through the Middle East Microform Project (MEMP)

*Aljadid: A record of Arab culture & arts* (Los Angeles, Nov. 1995-spring 1998) (OCLC #40354639) MF-11694 MEMP (1 reel) v. 1, no. 1-v. 4, no. 23

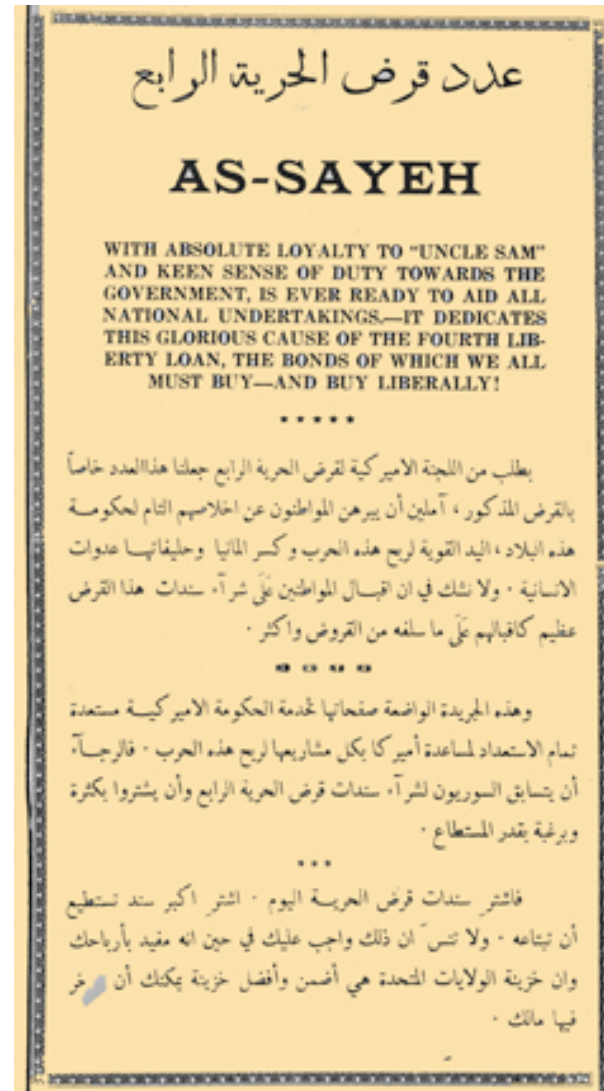
*Hürriyet* (Istanbul, Turkey, Dec. 22, 1948-Sept. 2, 1955) MF Neg. MF

*Navid* (Dec. 1999-Sept. 2002) (OCLC #52863572) MF-13579 MEMP (1 reel) v. 1, no. 1-v. 2, no. 9/10

### Additional Center Holdings

[Link to the Middle Eastern Studies topic guide](#)

[Link to Islam and Middle East dissertations](#)



From Al-Sayeh, October 17, 1918, an Arab-American newspaper published in New York City. This notice urged Syrians and the greater Arab-American community to support the military campaign against Germany in World War I.



## *The Middle East Microform Project: Past, Present, and Future*

The Middle East Microform Project (MEMP) recently entered its fifteenth year of preserving and circulating Middle East materials, an achievement worth commemorating in print. On this occasion, the cooperative program has undertaken an exercise to examine its history and consider various strategies for the future.

### I. ORIGINS

Founded in 1987 by members of the Middle East Librarians Association (MELA), the MEMP project was launched with a mission to furnish scholars with "Middle East research materials in microformat which would otherwise be unavailable to them," including materials that are "inaccessible, in poor condition, or beyond the economic means of an individual institution."

The geographic scope of the cooperative collection project was defined as the Arab Middle East; Israel for Israeli and Palestinian imprints; Turkey; Iran; Central Asia; and related areas not covered in other programs. Membership was open to any organization or institution with an interest in supporting the mission.

The program was provided office space in the Center for Research Libraries, which was authorized to administer the program as well. Bylaws were drafted and an Executive Committee was elected to provide governance. As of the first meeting in November 1987, there were 12 institutional members of the project:

Brown University	Ohio State University
Columbia University	University of Massachusetts
Harvard University	University of Pennsylvania
Hoover Institution (Stanford)	University of Texas
Indiana University	University of Washington
New York Public Library	Washington University

By November 1988, MEMP membership had grown to 20. In 2004 it stands at 24 members.

The first meetings were particularly significant for the events

set in motion that have continued to guide the committee and program to this day. The original goals of the project included collecting newspapers from Arab countries, with the aim of obtaining a wide selection from each country. In addition, the committee agreed to pursue manuscripts, ephemeral collections, and government documents, generally favoring original microfilm over the purchase of existing sets.

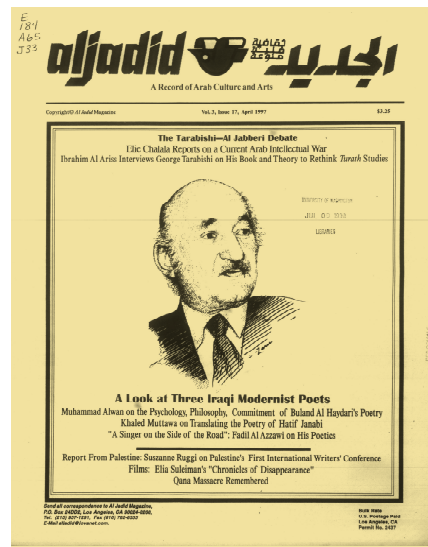
Perhaps most notable was the early decision to establish a list of extant Middle Eastern materials in microfilm. Fawzi Khoury and the University of Washington compiled the list, which was released in preliminary form in 1989 as *The National Union Catalog of Middle Eastern Microforms*. In the following years, the compendium was published, with support from the University of Washington, as *The Middle East in Microform*. The Union List focused on serials and archival sets, but not monographs.

Initially the Center lacked adequate technical support for Arabic and non-Roman script cataloging. As MEMP places a priority on primary source materials in Arabic,

Persian, and Turkish, a backlog of uncataloged MEMP material accumulated. To alleviate this bottleneck, the MEMP membership developed a cooperative cataloging program in which project materials were sent to volunteer members for bibliographic description. Once returned, the Center edited the information to conform to local and national standards then loaded it along with national bibliographic utilities into its catalog. MEMP continues to participate in cooperative cataloging as new materials are received.

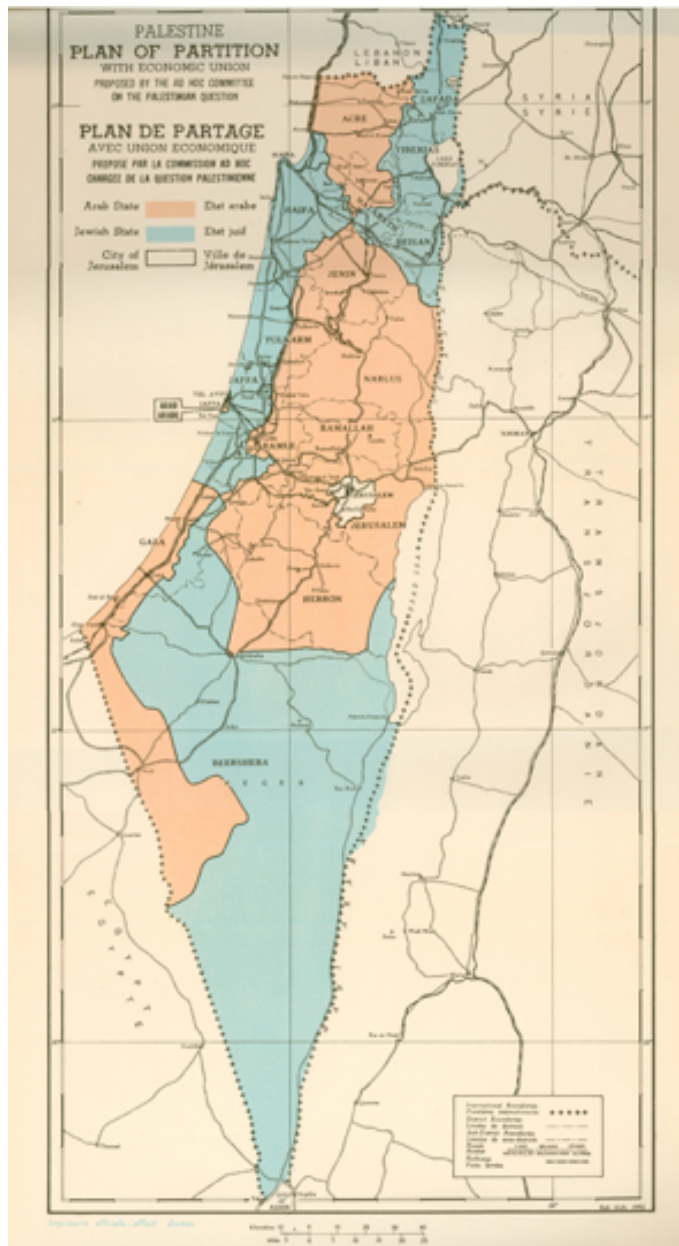
### Continuing Activity

Today, MEMP continues on the successful course set by its founders nearly 20 years ago. In addition to the array of newspapers from Algeria, Sudan, Turkey, Lebanon, and other Middle Eastern countries, MEMP films and circulates a variety of ephemeral materials, including significant Arabic pamphlets from the Library of Congress collection. The collection, dating to the 1940s and 50s, also contains press extracts and digests from various press services and U.S. and U.K. embassies.



*Published in Los Angeles, Aljadid is a monthly "record of Arab culture and arts" produced by the Magam Cultural Project.*





*This map, from Resolutions Adopted by the Different Organs of the U.N.O. on the Palestine Question, 1947-1952, published by the Syrian Republic Ministry of Interior, illustrates the three-way partition of Palestine authorized by UN Resolution 181. The November 29, 1947 resolution divided Palestine into an Arab state, a Jewish state, and an international zone around Jerusalem.*

MEMP continues to publicize and enhance access to its microfilm collection and publishes for its members an annual holdings list of project materials. Additional information on membership, meetings, recent projects, and more is available on the program's [MEMP Web site](#). The Web site includes an online proposal submission form that enables members, scholars, and others to suggest new projects.

## II. STRATEGIES AND DIRECTIONS

Along with its kindred microform projects at the Center (CAMP, LAMP, etc.), MEMP remains a model of cooperative collection development and inter-institutional action action not replicated among many fields of U.S. scholarship nor among most academic research institutions in the rest of the world. Even so, to maintain and develop its standing in the field of Middle Eastern studies, MEMP is committed to a methodical examination of its successes and challenges, strengths and weaknesses, to help identify new strategies and directions for future activity. As an aid, the following section of the discussion paper will look at existing policies, raise questions, and suggest potential avenues of pursuit for MEMP in the ever-changing landscape of information management.

### MEMP as Coordinator

MEMP is in a key position among libraries specializing Middle Eastern studies. As one of few cooperative activities in this field, it has the potential to assume an even greater role in enabling concerted preservation action among its members, and between its members and outside organizations, associations, and research institutions. While MELA may be the most appropriate venue for cooperation among its members and Middle East libraries in the acquisition of materials and the development of bibliographic control, MEMP's mission and infrastructure make it well suited to foster coordinated preservation activities among Middle East collections. To this aim, MEMP is undertaking the following activities:

- A preservation survey of its members and outside institutions to ascertain what they are doing (or not doing) in the way of preservation and access.
- Developing with the Library of Congress and other organizations a systematic approach to the selection of materials for preservation. This is part of conducting a wider discussion of national collection strengths and weaknesses.
- Expanding its membership through recruitment drives to major institutions in North America and abroad.



## MEMP as Disseminator

Just as MEMP would benefit from increased coordination among institutions, it would similarly profit from increased communication and dissemination of information. In an effort to further promote its resources as well as broader issues of preservation and access, MEMP is:

- Increasing communication and publicity about the project, its activities, and resources;
- Heightening contact and representation within MELA and the broader Middle Eastern Studies Association in the U.S., as well as with institutions in Canada (ICAMES) and other regions;
- Reaching out to institutions in the Middle East to seek new contacts, share information about MEMP, explore possibilities for projects, and campaign for membership and other forms of participation.

## Project Development

Historically, most of MEMP's collections have been drawn from resources held in U.S. institutions. Recently MEMP began to explore cooperative projects with outside institutions, such as the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies. There is a great body of original and critically valuable material available in other regions of the world. In addition, conditions outside Europe and the U.S., both in terms of climate and storage facilities, are not particularly conducive to preservation. However, production of microfilm in the Middle East is often well below national quality standards required for U.S. collecting. Thus, MEMP is discussing strategies to:

- Develop further cooperative projects with institutions outside of North American and Europe to focus on particular strong collections that can augment U.S. collections – e.g. historical runs of serials and newspapers not available in the U.S., manuscripts, archives, and other material.
- Encourage the development of collection inventories to identify valuable resources and foment collaborative funding opportunities.
- Promote preservation training and capacity building in the Middle East to conserve important resources and aid in the acquisition of unique material not held in the U.S.
- Explore the expansion of its current collection parameters to include new cate-

gories of material such as Ottoman-language, Central Asian, Arab-American publications and new formats.

Naturally, such deliberations raise issues of what type of project MEMP should be, and the role of a cooperative microform project in an increasingly digital age.

However, while the appropriate media for preserving and accessing resources may change, the committee is resolute in its adherence to the general principles set for the program over 15 years ago.

## Highlights from the MEMP Collection at the Center

*Ahali Group Newspapers* (1932-1963) ~ The Ahali group newspapers represented the ideas, philosophy, and political activities of first, the Ahali group, and later the National Democratic Party of Iraq. The political publications of the group commenced in 1932 and continued intermittently, under varied names, until 1963. The Chadirji Research Centre produced a set of 27 microfilm reels with a 1,646-page index to the collection. The set contains collections of *al-Ahali*, *Sawt al-Ahali*, *al-Mabdaa*, *al-Bayan*, *Sada al-Ahali*, *al-Mauatin*, and *al-Akhaa al-Watani*.

*Aljadid* (1993-2002) ~ A monthly "record of Arab culture and arts" produced by the Nagam Cultural Project.

*al-Hatif* (Baghdad, Iraq) ~ A general interest newspaper published in Baghdad from 1935. *al-Hatif* is important as a source for the history of the Shiites in Iraq in the middle third of the 20th century.

*Chaquèri Collection of Iranian Left-Wing Materials* (1960-85) ~ A collection of 1,100 pamphlets, serials, and political ephemera by or relating to activist groups opposing the regime of Muhammad Riza Shah Pahlavi.

[Link to the Middle Eastern Studies topic guide](#)

## The Arab-American Press

Kansas State University professor Michael W. Suleiman is conducting an extended study of the social and political history of Arabs in the United States. In his study Suleiman is mining the newspapers and journals published by and for immigrant communities in Brooklyn, New York, Detroit, Chicago, and other U.S. cities with large Arab populations. While the Arab-American experience has become a popular subject of study only recently, Suleiman has been doing pioneering research in the field for several decades now.

Suleiman's *Arabs in America: Building a New Future* (Temple University Press, 1999) is a pioneering scholarly production that brings together essays by 21 prominent scholars from a variety of disciplines—including anthropology, economics, history, law, literature and culture, political science, and sociology—to examine the history and influence of Arabs in the United States and Canada. Suleiman's forthcoming publication – *The Arab-American Experience in the United States and Canada: A Classified, Annotated Bibliography* (Ann Arbor: Pierian Press, 2004. ISBN: 0-87650-395-4) – will provide researchers with a comprehensive guide to Middle East scholarship and resources.

Research on the Arab Diaspora presents many challenges. Very little of the published legacy of the early Arab communities survives today and much of what does survive is in Arabic. For many years there was little interest in what many viewed as an insular culture, despite the fact that people of Arab descent have been contributing to U.S. and Canadian culture since the 1870s in fields as diverse as literature, science, politics, medicine, and commerce. Newspapers have offered scholars like Suleiman a valuable window into the Arab-American world of the 19th and 20th centuries. They contain copious documentation of the interests, political activities, fortunes, and values of the immigrant communities.

Newspapers like *Al-Hoda*, *Kawkab America*, *Al-Bayan*, and others also mirror the distinct identities of each of the various communities. Suleiman writes, "There was a communal solidarity, but the community was a collective of several communities. The sectarian and regional disputes that separated the Arabs back home were also salient in this 'temporary' residence."

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This September 16, 1918 special edition of *Al-Sayeh* (the Traveller), published in New York City, is dedicated to soldiers fighting for the "flag of justice and humanity" on World War I battlefields. The reporter estimated that 10,000 Syrian and other Arab-American soldiers were then serving in US forces.

Suleiman describes the important roles that newspapers played in immigrant Arab societies. They were, he asserts, "socializing agencies conveying the messages of their sectarian leadership." For the Orthodox there was *Kawkab America*; *Al Hoda* was the newspaper of the Maronites, and, later, *Al-Bayan* the newspaper of the Druze. "Within each community there were rivalries and competing newspapers, each claiming to be the best defender or representative of its sect."

Today the surviving newspapers from this era are particularly valuable because of the scarcity of other kinds of evidence. Very little archival material is available because the papers of important Arab American organizations and public figures are rarely available in public institutions. The essays in *Arabs in America* show researchers' heavy reliance upon newspapers and journals and oral histories. The survival of the newspapers is largely due to the prescience and energy of area studies bibliographers like George Atiyeh of the Library of Congress. For many years Dr. Atiyeh scoured library collections and was able to gather for microfilming about a dozen titles. These include: *Al-Nasr*, *Al-Ayam*, *Al-Bayan*, *Al-Sayeh*, *Kawkeb America*, *Al-Kawn*, *Al-Hoda*, *Meraat-ul-Gharb*, *Al-Funun*, *Al-Samir*, and the *Syrian World* in English. Where previously only fragments and broken runs of Arab American papers had been available in various repositories, the Library of Congress collection created a critical mass of historical materials.

The Center for Research Libraries recently acquired new runs of the Arab-American newspapers from the Library of Congress microfilm collection. These will soon be available for use by scholars at CRL member institutions. (See page 3.) This body of material will no doubt enable those scholars to enlarge our knowledge of the Arab Diaspora and its communities, building upon the important seminal work of Professor Suleiman and others.



An advertisement from a November 1, 1917 edition of *Al Sayeh*, a New York City daily, to promote a showing of *Rasputin, the Black Monk*, at the *Eden Theater*. Montagu Love, who starred in the silent film, was scheduled to attend and speak at the screening.



## Mining the Middle East Political Web for Research

As part of the Center's Mellon Foundation-funded investigation on archiving political communications from the World Wide Web (See *Focus*, [Spring 2003](#)) the Center examined some of the scholarly uses of Web content as primary source materials for research and publication. In the process, project investigators interviewed a number of scholars who drew heavily upon Political Web sources in their work. Interviews conducted with those scholars explored the nature of their research, the kinds of Web materials used, and the products generated by their work. The purpose of the study was to ensure that the methodologies for harvesting and preserving Political Web content will support the actual research being done.

One researcher surveyed had made intensive use of Web-based political communications pertaining to the Middle East, and published an analysis of changes in Political Web materials over time. Sean McLaughlin's "The Use of the Internet for Political Action by Non-state Dissident Actors in the Middle East," published in *First Monday* in November 2003, is a lengthy and revealing case study of Political Web production. Research for the publication was undertaken by McLaughlin for a senior honors thesis at Georgetown University under the direction of Professor Bernard I. Finel, the executive director of the university's M.A. in Security Studies Program and the Center for Peace and Security Studies.

Unlike the other researchers interviewed for the Political Web project, for McLaughlin the medium itself was the message. Where other researchers mined the contents of Political Web communications for information on actual events, McLaughlin studied the communications strategies adopted by selected political actors, analyzing the changes in those strategies and the messages they conveyed during a finite period.

McLaughlin studied multiple successive instances of more than two dozen Web sites maintained by three dissident groups: the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan, Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, and the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia. His research involved monitoring changes in the sites produced by the subject organizations by accessing those sites, at weekly intervals, through 2001 and 2002.

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Muslim Brotherhood of Jordan Web site homepage for February 2, 2001, as preserved in the Wayback Machine



Muslim Brotherhood of Jordan Web site homepage for May 6, 2001, as preserved in the Wayback Machine



McLaughlin's study provides much information about the behaviors of Political Web producers, particularly about the activities of dissident groups in a region where censorship and other state-imposed constraints disrupt traditional channels of communication between those groups and their supporters. He showed how the Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA), founded in 1996 to promote Islamic reform within the Saudi kingdom, crafted its use of Web communications to elude detection and accommodate the horizontal, non-hierarchical structure of this trans-national organization.

McLaughlin's work also indicates the variety of activities involved in producing Political Web content in the region. Producer activities cover a complex array of endeavors: creation of original political communications and information content; mounting of the content on the Web; the hosting of that content on one or multiple servers; and the support of its functionality over time. In some instances producers also "archive" their own content in open or semi-open Web spaces. The Movement for Islamic Reform in Arabia (MIRA), for instance, maintains back issues of their electronic newsletters on their Web site, like many traditional news organizations. Some producers also use their Web sites as conduits for gathering subscribers for printed newsletters and newspapers (Muslim Brotherhood) or participants for authenticated online listserv discussions (MIRA).

McLaughlin supplemented his real-time monitoring of the sites with use of the Internet Archive's Wayback Machine. For McLaughlin the Wayback Machine was a source of comparative material, namely of past instances of some of the subject organizations' sites from as early as 1996. He also used the Wayback Machine in his published article as a reliable tool for making subject sites that had disappeared since he began his study viewable in his reference citations.

McLaughlin sees the archives available through the Wayback Machine as vital to his study but somewhat limited. He indicated that certain kinds of site content that the Wayback Machine did not preserve, such as images, captions, and sound and multimedia files, may have been useful in his study. McLaughlin noted that a great deal of multimedia content, like Arabic language audio recordings available on some of the sites had been lost. He remarked that the Saudi dissident groups studied rely heavily on recorded messages, some as long as 30 minutes, which change frequently, even weekly. Yet despite the occasional losses of visual and audio content, however, McLaughlin felt he was able to get "an accurate picture of the political environment."

## The Ottoman Turkish Collection

The Ottoman Turkish Collection at the Center for Research Libraries features a significant number of monographs and periodical materials dating from 1860-1928. The material types vary from mainstream publications to rarely held travel journals. The majority of the materials were acquired from the collection of Joseph Birge, a missionary and scholar who lived in Turkey and conducted personal research on the Bektashi dervish order. The material was amassed over time in support of his activities at the mission, but also for his Bektashi studies. Much of the material relates to school instruction – books for religious instruction, textbooks, and dictionaries – plus tracts on the Bektashis, religious practices, and poetry.

The collection features noteworthy periodical resources, including:

- Mainstream daily newspapers like *Tanin*.
- Alternative press publications.
- Short runs of political satire magazines: 1918-19 editions of *Diken* and *Yeni Kalem* from the late 1920s.
- *Maarif*, a science periodical, which contains articles in French and translations from French into Turkish.
- *Osmanlı Resamlar Mecmusaı*, which contains reprints of Ottoman-era artistic works in both Western and Islamic styles.

Provincial and departmental yearbooks, called *Salnames*, represent another intriguing part the Joseph Birge acquisition. The *Salname* collection includes specimens from the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic, dating from 1891 to 1906, and cover numerous provinces and regions. Many contain maps.

Researchers across many disciplines will be keen to explore the array of travel journals, called *Seferatname*. Many of these detail the travel of Ottoman officials or notables in foreign lands, particularly Western Europe. Ahmet Ressmi and Ahmet Azim's journey to Prussia is included, as is their encounter with Frederick the Great. Other journals catalog travels throughout the Ottoman Empire and farther east.

Cataloging of the Ottoman Turkish collection is currently underway. Materials will be available for member use in the near future.



This August 11, 1910 edition of *Kalem*, a Turkish publication advertised as a "humorous and satirical journal appearing on Thursday," features a convening of American and European sovereigns at Yalova, Turkey.



## *MERJ: The Middle East Research Journals Project*

As part of its larger collaborative undertaking with the Council of American Overseas Research Centers (CAORC) the Center for Research Libraries has helped launch the Middle East Research Journals (MERJ) project.

### **Project Objectives**

Funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services, the MERJ project aims to provide bibliographic access, preservation microfilming, article-level indexing, and digital document delivery of nearly 2,200 selected Middle Eastern journal titles. The journals are published in Arabic, Greek, Hebrew, Turkish, and other regional languages, and housed in seven overseas research centers and their branch libraries (see research centers below).

### **Scholastic Benefits**

These institutions hold many rare and important journals that are under-used due to the paucity of bibliographic records and physical inaccessibility. However, given the interregional and interdisciplinary subject matter explored in many of these journals, they could be of great value to scholars and bring new information and new perspectives to a worldwide audience that increasingly acknowledges gaps in its knowledge and understanding of the history, culture, politics, religion, and issues that shape the Middle East. Once completed, the MERJ project will provide scholars, researchers, and library users worldwide with three key tools for access:

Union Catalog ~ A web-based union catalog containing the detailed journal holdings of all the participating centers. The catalog will include survey data on:

- Public accessibility of each title outside the Middle East
- The existence and coverage of microfilm reproductions
- The extent of existing article indexing in other publicly available indexes

Microfilm Reproductions ~ High-priority journal titles – selected according to their scholarly importance and obstacles to access – will be reproduced on microfilm, with multiple copies stored at various institutions, and made available via interlibrary loan.

Web-based Journal Index ~ An online database containing detailed information about articles within selected journals, along with digitized full-text versions of articles identified as high-use, high-impact materials that are otherwise unavailable. The index

items will feature a full bibliographic citation, thesaurus-based subject headings, and additional subject keywords.

### **Accessibility Assessment**

To date, the project has completed an initial survey of the 2,193 journals held at all of the participating libraries and compiled this data into a union list of journal titles. Of the 1,592 unique journals (eliminating duplicate titles held by more than one library), 1,264 titles or 79 percent have been converted into MARC-format bibliographic data and made available through the [American Overseas Digital Library online union catalog](#). MARC-format records for the remaining titles are currently being prepared by the Roja Muthiah Research Library in Chennai, India.

Initial findings have confirmed that the overseas research centers hold a number of unique and important journals deserving of greater preservation and access. These uncommon holdings include titles such as the *Archaeologia Cypria* (Kypriaki Archaologia) held by the Cyprus American Archaeological Research Institute in Nicosia and the *Bulletin de la Societe d'Etudes Historiques Juives* published in Cairo and held by the American Research Center in Egypt.

### **Creating Access**

In addition to the value of these rare materials, the accessibility survey illuminated the many challenges that must be surmounted to make these resources discoverable. Approximately 70 percent of all titles have no article-level indexing. About the same percentage show no preservation in microform.

The survey results identified journals in two categories that will be of interest to the committee setting the priorities for new indexing. One consists of un-indexed journals widely held in US libraries. They are noteworthy since article-level indexing of important titles in this group would produce the greatest bibliographic benefit per dollar spent, for the largest set of users. Such journals would have a high priority for indexing, although not for digitization or microfilming.

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Current Availability of MERJ Project Journals

<u>Availability</u>	<u>Access Locations</u>	<u>Percent of Total</u>
Held by more than 25 OCLC or RLIN libraries	1,028	64.6%
Held by fewer than 25 OCLC or RLIN libraries	564	35.4%

The second set consists of MERJ journals in various centers that are not held elsewhere (or are very rare), especially in the US. The 500-plus journal titles identified in this set include natural targets for preservation, indexing, and digitization to create new bibliographic and full-text access where none existed before.

Additional Challenges

Once the initial tasks of data identification, cataloging, and prioritization are completed, preservation microfilming, article indexing, and scanning from microfilm can begin. These activities present their own challenges. For one, microfilming of unique titles held in the Middle East will be challenging due to the lack of quality filming programs in many countries. Article indexing and full-text scanning are also in their nascent stages in many areas, and identifying reliable partners remains a challenge. Add to these the difficulties of investigating copyright status for the journals and articles in question, and the assembling of complete runs of particular journals, and the project takes on Herculean dimensions.

However, with careful planning and the determination of the overseas partners, it is expected that the challenges can be overcome and outcomes made available to benefit scholars both in the U.S. and in the region. The target date for completion of the project is September 2004.

Research Centers with MERJ Holdings

- American Research Institute in Turkey (Ankara and Istanbul)
- American Institute for Maghrib Studies in Morocco and Tunisia
- American Institute for Yemeni Studies in Yemen
- American Research Center in Egypt
- American Center for Oriental Research in Jordan
- Albright Institute for Archaeological Research in Israel
- Cyprus-American Archaeological Research Institute in Cyprus



## *Improving Access to Middle East Serials: OACIS for the Middle East*

Yale University and a partnership of national and international institutions have combined resources and expertise on a project to collect and circulate important Middle Eastern periodicals through a freely accessible database called OACIS (Online Access to Consolidated Information on Serials).

The Web-accessible database combines bibliographic description and library holdings of Arabic, English, and other language serial titles including those available in print, microform, and online. The OACIS database, accessible on the Web through the [Yale Library](#), provides access to the literature of this increasingly important region of the world for a wide range of educational, government, and commercial institutions. The ultimate aim is to develop a better understanding of the varied economies, politics, languages, and cultures of the Middle East and to share resources among institutions, students, and scholars.

Project OACIS is international in scope, engaging European, American, and Middle Eastern individuals and institutions. US partner libraries – including Yale University, Cornell University, Ohio State University, the University of Pennsylvania, University of Michigan, University of Texas, and University of Washington – have contributed an organized body of titles to establish the database prototype. The Universitaets-und Landesbibliothek of Sachsen-Anhalt in Halle, Germany is a partner. Additional participating institutions include Princeton University, Belamand University (Lebanon), University of Jordan (Amman), and Tishreen University (Syria).

### **A Growing Partnership**

Project Manager Simon Samoeil, who is Curator of the Near East Collection at Yale, conducted several visits in the Middle East in 2003 to promote the OACIS project among prospective Middle Eastern partners. He and Principal Investigator Ann Okerson conducted follow-up visits in March and early April 2004, enlisting new members into the partnership; integrating Middle Eastern institutions into the project database; finalizing agreements in Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria; and inaugurating a mirror site in the region.

"It is our hope the project will bring real benefit to these partners," Samoeil reported. "We are visiting sites with very important collections, and the inclusion of these records will bring recognition to those institutions. In addition, we will be bringing

interns from partner institutions to the United States for intensive training so they may continue to expand their own work and activities upon their return."

### **Integrating Cultures and Technologies**

The continuing success of the OACIS project will require solutions to numerous cultural, technological, and documentation challenges. For example, the vast majority of computer systems are designed to process information from left-to-right and communicate in languages based on the Roman alphabet. Arabic is read from right-to-left in a non-Roman script, which encumbered for many years the proliferation of digital technology among Arab-speaking cultures.

"The technical problems of displaying Arabic records in the database are being tackled," commented Elizabeth Beaudin, OACIS Technical Manager. "We recognize Romanized script records are not useful for the Middle East partners. The database has been set up to handle Arabic script, including display of right-to-left headings, and we are looking forward to receiving Arabic vernacular records in the near future."

An important part of the work in the field involves detailed instruction on standards for submission and participation. Some older records in Middle Eastern institutions, for example, omit the place of publication, a key search term. The project has developed a number of techniques for documenting this information, such as city indexes that enable records to be tagged for location searches.

"The project is a very challenging one, from a technical perspective," Beaudin noted. "For one, Middle Eastern institutions have different formats for their bibliographic records. Particularly when it comes to subject headings, we will need to be careful how the information is organized."



*An arabesque from the OACIS website.*

*continued on next page*



## Expanding the Global Village

The database is designed to search across titles, place of publication, and subject. An advanced search is under development for increased capability. The search interface can be adapted to display in Arabic, German, English, Spanish, or French. The Arabic component features a dynamic keyboard that accepts search terms in the vernacular, although records currently are stored in Roman script only.

In the future, the database will incorporate an ever-expanding group of Middle Eastern languages. As it develops, Project OACIS will also serve as a gateway to those serials by enhancing content delivery of those titles.

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## MISSION STATEMENT

*The Center's mission is to support advanced research and teaching in the humanities, sciences, and social sciences by ensuring the survival and availability of the knowledge resources vital to those activities.*

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