

Arabic and Middle Eastern Electronic Library (AMEEL)
Interlibrary Loan Workshop

Instructors

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Report presented by

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1. Introduction

This report will discuss the general perception of attendees of the workshop; it will also outline some of the issues and questions raised by several attendees on various topics. An overall, general evaluation of the sessions will be touched on to provide suggestions and recommendations to aid in the planning for any future events.

2. General Impression

The attendees (Attachment 1) all showed genuine interest in the topic covered by the workshop. They all welcomed the idea of cooperation and collaboration amongst institutions of the Arab states, and with American institutions.

The importance of joint ventures was asserted from the start by both the President of the University of Jordan and Dr. Mohamad Raqab, Library Director of the stated university, as stated in their opening speeches. This message was, likewise, repeated by a majority of attendees during the course of the workshop.

3. Raised Issues:

In order to summarize the details raised during the workshop, they are presented in points with the responses, provided by Yale University Library trainers (except where indicated) within squared brackets.

This section can be divided into 2 categories: OACIS and AMEEL

3.1 OACIS: In general, there was an unclear understanding of this project, which is a union list of Middle East serials, and whose external funding has ended:

- ✚ The role of the Library of Congress in OACIS [During the launch of OACIS, its holdings were not online];
- ✚ The overall benefits of OACIS [To locate individual titles that are unique to specific institutions; it is a system that has more than 40,000 records, almost 50% of which are unique titles.];
- ✚ The possibility of the British Library becoming a member [The decision of becoming a member falls on the institution and at the time of launch, the BL did not have detailed holdings records];
- ✚ The absence of representatives in this ILL workshop from numerous Arab (Middle East) states [The next step for the OACIS team could be to widen the geographic scope and visit the Arabian Gulf area; this list of invitees was drawn from survey responses conducted during the OACIS project];
- ✚ The current availability of statistics on the use of the bibliographic data provided by the partners: statistics on number of searches (simple/advanced), and number of hits pertaining to each institutions titles [This question is being raised with the OACIS team, mainly Elizabeth Beaudin, Technical Manager];
- ✚ The visible discrepancy between searching for a title in English and then in Arabic; the user does not get the same number of hits or the same information [The beginning of the project included only American institutions that used LOC Romanization table for non-Roman scripts];

- ✚ The possibility of including a direct link to the institution holding the title with the name of a contact and an email [Another question to be raised with the OACIS team];
- ✚ The possibility of contributing the full-text of publications to OACIS in order to aid the digitization project it plans to present [though its successor project, AMEEL, OACIS could benefit from this form of contribution];
- ✚ The possibility of OACIS being integrated into ILLiad [It is an idea worth developing at a later stage probably];
- ✚ The life span of the now-concluded OACIS project, which had been funded by the US Department of Education [Yale Library has committed itself to sustaining the project infrastructure – so long as the partners are willing and able to contribute records – because of the University's keen and long-standing interest in Middle East studies and collections. However, Yale is not in a position to expand the project beyond current partners, without some additional external funding];
- ✚ The accuracy of digitizing Arabic fonts/scripts using OCR [Beaudin is leading a group of Yale employees and students working on identify the problematic aspects; Dr. Shaheen informed the attendees of the use of ICR (Intelligent Character Recognition – software trained to recognize handwriting and numbers) in Egypt by Microfilm Egypt (www.microfilmegypt.com)].

3.2 AMEEL, a "full text" and "portal" project, funded by the US Department of Education:

- ✚ The reason this project is being funded [The ultimate objective is to create an electronic Middle East library that serves students, scholars, and others, or to be a significant component of such a scholarly library];
- ✚ The connection between OACIS and AMEEL: continuation or components [AMEEL acts as a second component of, a follow-up to, OACIS: one can use OACIS to pinpoint the location of an article amongst the contributing libraries and then place an article request through AMEEL's ILL component; thus, OACIS becomes the central search engine, but the ordering component has not been included yet];
- ✚ Other aspects of AMEEL: these include a digitization component, in which selected journals will be scanned and OCR'd; a "portal" for ME scholarly works; and "back-end" integration architecture;
- ✚ The issue of a fee-based service versus a "no fee" service required some discussion:
 - ✓ Dr. Shaheen: in some institutions the status of this issue is an administrative decision; if later on an institution decides to charge it would probably be based on its adopted policy; the National Library of Egypt has to search for ways to acquire some income and support this service;
 - ✓ Ms. El Ridi pointed out that the main reason some institutions might not be willing to become partners of any ILL project is that they are scared of becoming just pure lenders with no borrowing requests; they might feel their collection is more expansive and broader than other participating members;
 - ✓ Mr. Talbi pointed out that the issue is not whether to charge or not but to stress on how much an institution can save; use numbers and figures to prove this to admin; institutions can save money to strengthen their collection;
 - ✓ Ms. Jones stressed the point that the primary phase of AMEEL will focus on a "no fee" service with intention of building an awareness of a new service; this does not exclude the likelihood that a different policy might evolve requiring a fee;

- ✚ The benefit of ILL in sometimes identifying gaps in the collection by monitoring and tracking repeated requests: books can be purchased if the payment required for the borrowing and the shipping outweighs their original cost;
- ✚ Copyright: it was agreed that the issue of copyright and other legal matters should be discussed in more detail; some aspects were discussed:
 - ✓ degree of responsibility of the library and the reader in respecting copyright; the library cannot assure total control to avoid infringement, but it is responsible for raising user awareness (postings, brochures, concept of fair use, staff knowledge...);
 - ✓ the period of time electronic articles can be posted;
 - ✓ ownership of the borrowed article (i.e. legality of the library filing the article for future use by its readers);
 - ✓ some institutions (as Katia Medawar pointed out) are uncertain of which law to adopt American or Lebanese; the example given was the American University of Beirut because it has this dual identity;
 - ✓ an interesting point was brought up in relation to the British Library and the fees it places on delivery (service charge + a copyright fee + VAT charge where applicable; this does not apply to orders from the USA);
- ✚ Statistics: The advantages of the use of statistics was outlined: fill requests, kinds of lenders, responsive lenders, response times, categories of users (staff, departments), role of an institution as lender vs. borrower;
- ✚ Tools and software packages: The participants discussed the availability of several packages used in ILL delivery and management: Odyssey, OCLC ILLiad, Ariel, RLG; the use of the adopted automation system; traditional and simple applications (like MS excel for management) are applicable; it was noted that some integrated library systems have an ILL component, but not all are compatible with other systems; a cross platform is needed;
- ✚ The importance of differentiating processes from tools because at some points the attendees were transposing the use of the terms;
- ✚ Policies: The adoption of two levels of policies: the first one is related to each individual library and its workflow; the second is between the members of AMEEL (partners) outlining the agreement amongst the members, the process and standards of the supplying and requesting library;
- ✚ Other practical details: delivery format (print, electronic, microfiche?), acceptable requests (unknown items), checking collection first, identifying several potential lenders.

4. Suggestions and Recommendations for Future Workshops:

- ✚ Scheduling the workshops for two intense days;
- ✚ The ability to participate and contribute actively in drafting the ILL policies and procedures;
- ✚ A workshop on the technical part and skills of ILL;
- ✚ The presence and attendance of the technical individuals of participating institutions;
- ✚ More practical components ought to be integrated into the workshop;
- ✚ Other than contacting institutions in the Gulf, other contacts could be: national library associations, national libraries and the Specialized Librarians Association (Gulf Chapter).

5. Partnership Willingness:

The attendees were individually asked if they would be willing to participate as active members of AMEEL; the unanimous response was positive. However, all made it clear that the final decision will have to be made by upper management (decision makers) in their respective institutions. They went on to propose applicable steps:

- ✚ Sending out formal letters of invitation to upper management to join AMEEL's ILL partnership;
- ✚ Inviting administrators to identify benefits of ILL and outline procedures;
- ✚ Requesting an official letter from individual institutions (partners) confirming their willingness to provide partnering participants with articles for free for a defined time period;
- ✚ Showing a sign of good faith on behalf of Yale University by providing further training, helping in finding funds to automate the systems, and providing the necessary tools (i.e. Ariel);
- ✚ Appointing a partner member in the region (or geographically accessible) to provide technical support;
- ✚ Suggesting a one or two-year trial where members would provide material for free;
- ✚ Verifying the fact that after the trail period an evaluation session should be held to discuss suggestions of amending the policy to eliminate weaknesses, to decide on the fee vs. free delivery and other issues.

6. Projects in the Region:

The three-day workshop was very informative as to various projects being performed in the region. The discussion of these ventures allowed the participants and the instructors to exchange experiences, advice, and knowledge:

- ✚ Egyptian National Scientific & Technical Information Network (ENSTINET) Union List of Periodicals in Egypt: <<http://www.sti.sci.eg/ulist.htm>>'
- ✚ University of Jordan Library Depository for theses from Arab universities: as assigned by the Association of Arab Universities. The Center's function is to receive, classify, organize and deposit university theses that have been submitted to Arab universities in the various disciplines; these are also being digitized;
- ✚ American International Consortium of Academic Libraries (AMICAL) projects deal with resource sharing and ILL;
- ✚ Board of Arab Cultural Ministries are working on placing all Arab periodicals online (the Jordanian Library Association is working with this group);
- ✚ The establishment of a library consortium amongst twenty-five (25) academic institutions of the GCC; borrow from and lend to resources to each other;
- ✚ The current establishment of an ILL service amongst four institutions of higher education in Lebanon (Notre Dame University, Lebanese American University, University of Balamand and Université Saint-Esprit de Kaslik); and
- ✚ The establishment of the Jordanian Center of Excellence for Public University Library Services, located at Yarmouk University; some objectives are to gather all different information resources in one web location to permit access to academic users; facilitate inter-library loan; permit access to the e-learning resources; and digitize periodicals and special collection books for old and rare titles.

7. General Evaluation:

- ✚ ACOR Accommodations: The comments made by attendees was that staying at ACOR was a good decision, because it provided a domestic feeling and allowed attendees to further interact; the staff at ACOR were very accommodating;
- ✚ Location: The decision to choose the University of Jordan as the site was very sensible because the library administration and the public relations office proved to be very hospitable, cooperative and obliging. They were more than willing to cater to all needs and requests (transportation, photocopying, etc.), even those requested at short notice and not agreed on beforehand;
- ✚ Set-up: The training lab was prepared even before the arrival of the training team on Sunday; the software (Odyssey) was downloaded according to Ms. Beaudin's instructions, sufficient computers were made available, lunches and coffee breaks were generously provided. It was agreed amongst the instructors that impressive notes of appreciation should be addressed to the University President and the Library Director.
- ✚ Schedule: One major comment was made about the opening ceremony that began at 12:00 noon. The attendees spent the morning impatiently and felt that a day had been wasted. Suggestion: Future sessions should begin at 9:00 or 10:00 a.m. The trainers did not completely abide to the time set forth (Attachment 2). At many instances, the sessions ended earlier than expected. It is believe that the main reason was the knowledge and experience (whether basic or advanced) of all the attendees in ILL. The evaluation forms will better portray this aspect.
- ✚ Activities: It was felt that no plan was made for free time activities. The attendees had to individually or collectively come up with ways to spend the late afternoons. Some would go sightseeing; others went shopping. They decided on having a dinner one night, at their expense, outside the ACOR facilities. It was a relaxing and entertaining activity before the attendees dispersed the next day. As a note for the future maybe such details can be observed in advance.
- ✚ Ambience: From the very first evening, there was an atmosphere of camaraderie and teamwork; a positive attitude.

8. Conclusion:

Overall, the workshop was a success; all the attendees expressed a positive attitude that future collaboration is a possibility. This workshop was considered as a launching pad for further cooperation and serious work in the near future. If dealt with efficiently and not allowed to prolong, constructive steps can be achieved. It is more useful and effective if the decision makers of the attending institutions are approached before long. The representatives have probably presented evaluative reports to their directors on the different aspects of the workshop, and hopefully the advantages of a partnership. A report highlighting the importance of AMEEL and a number of conclusions attained during the workshop would prove that the follow-up has begun. A template letter of agreement to be signed by the institution's decision maker could be enclosed as well, while highlighting that this would represent the institution's commitment.