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# 12 Library Collaboration in the Middle East and North Africa

## Introduction

The value of collaboration among libraries – intra country, regionally, and internationally, in the developed world, the developing world, or among those nations least advanced – is not disputed. It has been recognized for many years that working together is essential in dealing with the vast quantity of available information and the reality of insufficient financial resources. Enhancing services and facilitating sharing, achieving economic value, saving time and effort, and sharing experience and expertise are some of the compelling reasons for library collaboration (Al-Harrasi & Al-Aufi, 2012). Yet, there have been a number of obstacles hindering library collaboration in the developing world such as lack of personnel and education programs, limited resources, changing priorities, unstable governments, and centralized decision-making (Bouazza, 1986, pp. 374–375).

If education, research, and scholarship are to be advanced, collaboration among the libraries that support universities, research institutes, and other cultural institutions devoted to the creation and use of knowledge must occur and indeed, must be enhanced. Many libraries throughout the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are demonstrating a willingness to establish collaborative connections that will take them beyond attempted self-sufficiency and destructive rivalry to programs that promise much more than can be done individually. Traditional associations for libraries and innovative arrangements among librarians, consortia, and cultural and governmental organizations are combining to advance a collaborative agenda. But progress is uneven, challenges are many, and much remains to be accomplished.

This chapter presents an overview of the recent developments in library cooperation and collaboration in the Middle Eastern and North African countries. It is based on the findings of a comprehensive literature review, interviews and email correspondence with administrators and librarians knowledgeable about the region, and online questionnaires used to learn of major collaborative initiatives. It details cooperative efforts of library consortia, library associations and other types of organizations and concludes with a discussion of challenges and obstacles facing implementation of projects in MENA countries along with recommendations for collaborative possibilities in the region.

# The Middle East and North Africa: Definition

Listings of countries and territories that constitute the region commonly known as the Middle East and North Africa vary considerably depending on source and perspective, and those tasked with defining the region find this to be a challenge. Tristam (2008) observed: "The 'Middle East' as a term can be as contentious as the region it identifies. It's not a precise geographical area like Europe or Africa. It's not a political or economic alliance. . . It's not even an agreed-upon term by the countries that constitute it." The *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa* defines the region as ranging from "Afghanistan, Iran, and Turkey to the Fertile Crescent (including Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Palestinian territories, and Egypt) and to North African states such as Libya, Algeria, and Morocco" (Mattar, 2004, p. x). For purposes of this chapter, the Middle East and North Africa includes the relatively large geographic area stretching from the Atlantic to the Indian Oceans encompassing the eastern and southern Mediterranean Sea. Countries included are: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Turkey, and Yemen.

# Literature Review

Historically, a significant number of libraries deemed to be "great" existed in the area of the world now termed the Near and Middle East, starting with that in Giza, Egypt, dating back to as early as 2500 BC (Ali, 1985, p. 68). The Royal Library of Alexandria (Egypt), the Royal Library of Ashurbanipal (Iraq), the Libraries of Pergamum and Celsus (Turkey), the Theological Library of Caesarea Maritima (Palestine), and the Imperial Library of Constantinople (Turkey) are among them (Coqueugniot, 2013).[1]

These libraries were built through extraordinary dedication to identifying and obtaining everything that could be found of a scholarly or educational nature. Consider how the library deemed to be pre-eminent at the time, the one at Alexandria founded by Ptolemy I in the third century BC, is said to have

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1 Compilations of the great libraries of the ancient or classical world are interesting but give a somewhat incomplete historical record. A number of these can be found online. See, for example: http://www.onlinecollege.org/2011/05/30/11-most-impressive-libraries-from-the-ancient-world/; http://www.rationalavenue.com/gallery/7-greatest-libraries-of-the-world/; and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_libraries_in_the_ancient_world. All accessed August 14, 2014.

gathered its collections, which by one estimate numbered "as many as 700 000" (Ali, 1985, p. 68). Charged with obtaining all of the world's knowledge, buyers were regularly dispatched to Rhodes, Athens, and other centers of scholarship and the book trade to get what they could of works in the sciences and mathematics, history, geography, engineering, anatomy, physiology, medicine, and many other subject areas. Reportedly every ship coming through the port of Alexandria was required to make available for copying any manuscripts on board (Canfora, 1987, p. 20). In perhaps one of the earliest examples of "interlibrary loan," Ptolemy III Eurgetes asked to borrow from Athens original manuscripts of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides. The Athenians agreed, after requiring an enormous fee to insure return of the documents. Ptolemy is said to have then had them copied but he retained the originals, unconcerned about loss of his silver and any impact on future cooperation of this sort (Barnes, 2000, p. 65; El-Abbadi, 1998; Phillips, 2010).[2] Not that collaboration among libraries and scholarly centers was the norm in ancient times. Competition would seem to more accurately describe the situation. One account has the Egyptians prohibiting export of papyrus as a way of "bringing the rival library (at Pergamum) to its knees" (Canfora, 1987, p. 48). Apparently competitiveness among libraries was not unknown in the ancient Middle East, something still evident today as they vie for scarce resources in order to survive and flourish, thereby creating tension (de Groot & Branch, 2009).

## Defining Library Cooperation

Yet, "no single institution has the resources . . . to go it alone. . . . [which] demands cooperation – not a diversity of weaknesses but a union of strengths," as Herman B. Wells, President of Indiana University from 1932 to 1968, observed some decades ago (Wells, 1967, p. 355; see also Sandler, 2014). Practicalities and necessity are the main drivers of collaboration today. Libraries form collaborative partnerships in order to benefit from cost savings, efficiencies and expanded services. They even collaborate to survive. Inspired by Michael Walzer's, 1994 book, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad*, Gaetz (2012) uses these two labels to categorize collaboration. Thin collaboration often lacks financial commitment (e.g., simply being a member of a large consortium is seen to suffice) while thick collaboration requires a well-defined purpose along with significant

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**2** However, accounts that Ptolemy "played (such) a trick on the Athenians" are disputed, characterized as inventions of rival Pergamum. See Canfora (1987, pp. 48, 103).

financial commitment and deeper involvement by participating members (e.g., planning joint service programs or sharing open source computing systems) (p. 83).

Similarly, Horton (2013) characterizes collaboration with shared goals and financial commitment as "deep collaboration" and defines it as "two or more people or organizations contributing substantial levels of personal or organizational commitment, including shared authority, joint responsibility, and robust resources allocation, to achieve a common or mutually-beneficial goal" (p. 66). She lists the following characteristics of deep collaboration:

- Clearly defined, shared vision among participants
- Greater level of engagement, time commitments, and goal alignment
- Higher levels of responsibility, risk, and commitment
- Optimization of information resources and staff expertise
- Significant imagination and perseverance
- Ability to adapt and change as the process evolves and deepens
- Reciprocity and congeniality, and staff skilled in negotiation and compromise
- Shared power and decision-making. (p. 66)

Horton (2013) observes that newer large collaborative efforts are too big to fail. Those that failed in the past did so because of lack of shared vision, goals, leadership, and resource commitment as well as unwillingness to give up autonomy.

Deep collaboration can be demonstrated in what is termed "joint-use," "dual use," or "shared" libraries. Joint-use libraries are the "outcomes of formal agreements between two or more separate authorities which provide two or more groups of users with equitable access to resources, services and facilities" (Bundy, 1997, p. 1, as cited in Bundy, 2007). One of the oldest such initiatives in the United States of America was the Joint University Libraries in Nashville, Tennessee, which began operation in 1938 (Dedrick, 1994, p. 437) and continued until the institutional merger of two of its founding partners Vanderbilt University and George Peabody College for Teachers in 1979. Joint-use libraries are considered the "ultimate form of cooperation" (Bundy, 2003) and "libraries of the future" (McNicol, 2008). Some advantages of such libraries are:

> They encourage collaboration and partnership working; they have the potential to be more environmentally sustainable; they can be a forum to promote lifelong learning, especially within communities where education has not been traditionally valued; and, perhaps most importantly of all, they can help to combat social exclusion and promote community cohesion, creating a more equitable society. (McNicol, 2008, p. *xix*)

Dedrick (1994) surveyed joint-use academic libraries in the United States and concluded that they "provide significant cost savings and service enhancements"

but also introduce, as expected, inherent administrative burdens such as "managing staff who operate under two separate payroll systems and institutional personnel policies" (pp. 440–441). McNicol (2008) reported more than 120 joint-use libraries worldwide as of 2007. A bibliography prepared by the American Library Association (2012) lists scores of journal articles and reports, along with the contents of entire issues of professional journals (e.g., *Library Trends*, vol. 54, no. 4, Spring 2006) featuring joint-use facilities.

## Library Cooperation in MENA

The literature on library cooperation and collaboration among libraries in the Middle East and North Africa is also relatively rich, covering opportunities, obstacles and problems. History and efficacy of library cooperation along with the barriers hindering collaborative efforts have been reviewed in both developed and developing countries (Hangsing, Saraf & Nath, 2003; Moghaddam & Talawar, 2009; Pathak & Deshpande, 2004), and the Middle East (Ahmed & Suleiman, 2012; Sheshadri, Shivalingaiah & Manjunatha, 2011). Articles on librarians working together in associations abound, among them those describing affiliations across the Arab world (Baha El Din, 2005; Bezan, 2013).

Almost three decades ago Bouazza (1986) wrote that "no single library is able to purchase all the publications produced internationally" or even nationally, and detailed the obstacles faced by nine MENA countries[3] in order to develop effective library collaboration programs (pp. 374–375). Brown and Blucker (1987) wrote of an early innovative approach to cooperative collections development among Saudi military hospital libraries. Sliney (1990) described collaborative activities of medical libraries in the Gulf States. Bukhari (1996) studied resource sharing in the Gulf from different perspectives. Khurshid (1997) emphasized the need for cooperation in bibliographic control of especially local materials, discussed the prospects for cooperation, highlighted the difficulties, and recommended that a cooperative cataloging program be developed by King Fahd National Library along with the goals, guidelines, rules and procedures for participating libraries. Israel and Turkey became the first MENA countries to set up consortia to share electronic resources (Adler, 1999; Tonta, 2001). Al-Ansari & Al-Enezi (2001) noted that the cooperation among health sciences libraries (with small collections) in Kuwait is limited. Al-Fahdli & Johnson (2006) reviewed

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3 They were: Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Syria, and Tunisia.

the attitudes towards resource sharing and interlibrary lending in the Gulf States and investigated the barriers to the adoption of electronic document delivery (EDD) systems based on a survey of 40 Kuwaiti librarians. Although they found general support for resource sharing, there was not great awareness of the availability of EDD systems.

Of more recent vintage are assessments of consortium development and activity in individual MENA countries: the Academic Library Consortium in Jordan (Ahmed & Suleiman, 2012); the ANKOS collaborative in Turkey (Cukadar, Tuglu & Gurdal, 2013); Iranian information consortia (Naghshineh & Fahimnia, 2003); and attitudes about library consortia in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) (Sheshadri, Shivalingaiah & Manjunatha, 2011).

Although descriptions of multinational library collaboration involving MENA countries is lacking in the literature, Al-Harrasi and Al-Aufi (2012) recently investigated the potential for cooperation among Omani academic libraries. They first discussed the objectives of collaboration under four categories (enhancing services and facilitating sharing; achieving economic value; saving effort and time; and sharing experience and expertise) and examined attitudes of library directors and key librarians in four libraries by means of semi-structured and face-to-face interviews. They found that Omani academic librarians consider collaboration as a must "to achieve their desired goals and to gain collective institutional and individual benefits" (p. 256). Al-Harrasi and Jabur (2014) carried out a similar qualitative study with twenty-three managers to identify critical factors contributing to successful collaboration among Omani academic libraries and found that coordination and communication; technical resources; financial resources; and policy and strategy are most crucial.

Apart from the work of international entities such as the World Health Organization's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean countries (WHO EMRO) (Al-Shorbaji, 2006), no examples of deep collaboration among MENA countries were found in the literature. Perhaps, as Khafagi (1989, p. 249) observed some twenty-five years ago in the context of Arab countries, national borders keep them "unconnected in a way that hinder a real. . . achievement in the field of information." Nor were joint-use libraries in the region discovered. Nevertheless, "de facto" collaboration exists among different types of libraries in MENA countries even if it is hard to describe such ventures as deep because of lack of formal agreements among the libraries involved. For instance, the National Library of Turkey provides study space and library and information services for high school and undergraduate students whose information needs cannot be satisfied more fully by their respective libraries.

## Methods

The foregoing literature search on library cooperation in the Middle East and North African countries used both printed and online resources, as well as web sites of libraries in MENA countries and those of regional and international institutions. These efforts complemented the authors' personal knowledge of libraries and librarianship in the region and revealed new examples of colla-borative projects. In addition, fruitful conversations took place and extensive email messages were exchanged between the authors and prominent librarians conversant with developments about collaboration among MENA libraries. Managers of library associations and library consortia also were contacted to gather specific information about the nature of their collaborative efforts (e.g., the number of libraries involved, types of resources shared, activities engaged in, etc.).

Comparison of findings obtained through the literature search and personal communications was then undertaken. Next, three versions of online question-naires were constructed, with different forms designed for library consortia, library associations, and other types of collaborative organizations (see Appen-dices 12.1, 12.2, 12.3). These were sent to the institutions identified during the earlier research. SurveyMonkey versions of the questionnaires also were posted to various library lists in the region to increase response rate (see Appendices 12.4, 12.5, 12.6), which nevertheless proved rather low.

Data gathered were keyed into Excel spreadsheets for analysis. Each consor-tium, association, and other organization was classified by country along with official names, contact persons, websites, founding dates, and other relevant information. The description and analysis that follows is the result of the exten-sive literature review, interviews, email correspondence, and survey data.

## Findings

Cooperation among libraries and librarians in the region takes the form of formal consortia, traditional library associations, involvement with international library and information technology organizations, digital library initiatives, inte-grated library system (ILS) vendor-based membership groups, activity led by ministries of culture or of higher education, participation in nation-wide com-munication and research networks, and informal physical and online gathering of local professional communities.

## Library Consortia

The most obvious demonstration of libraries working together to advance a common agenda is the existence of consortia. Web-based and library research along with personal contacts with individuals knowledgeable about MENA libraries and the online questionnaires turned up references to library consortia in Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia, and Turkey. The UAE is reported to have four functioning organizations of this type (Sheshadri, Shivalingaiah & Manjunatha, 2011, p. 370) and two additional Iranian cooperatives are identified by Moghaddam and Talawar (2009, p. 4). A white paper written for the publishing services group ACCUCOMS makes mention of consortia-like organizations in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as well (Spaandonk, 2012, p. 9). It would appear, therefore, that at least fifteen consortia are functioning at some level in eleven out of twenty MENA countries. A list of the consortia by country can be found in Appendix 12.4. All appear to be of relatively recent vintage, most established since the turn of the 21st century. Three of these – the Anatolian University Libraries Consortium (ANKOS), the Lebanese Academic Library Consortium, and the Israeli Inter-University Center for Digital Information Services (MALMAD) – are members of the International Coalition of Library Consortia (ICOLC), an organization of some two hundred operations world-wide that facilitates discussions of common interest to library cooperatives of all types (International Coalition of Library Consortia, n.d.).

The development of high-speed data and communication networks in individual countries prompted interest in the availability of information and scholarly digital resources and thus the founding of consortia such as the Israeli MALMAD and eFADA, the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in the UAE. The latter was created "to enhance the education and research resources available to stimulate UAE's knowledge economy by establishing a shared union catalog, engaging in cooperative collection development and developing a national digital institutional repository" (eFADA, n.d.) and is under the umbrella of Ankabut, the UAE's Advanced Network for Research and Education.

Most influential in bringing about cooperative arrangements in the Arab world has been EIFL or the Electronic Information for Libraries initiative, a not-for-profit organization founded in 1999 that enables "access to knowledge in developing and transition economy countries" (EIFL [Electronic Information for Libraries] (n.d.)). Among them are Algerian Consortium of Higher Education and Scientific Research Establishments, Egyptian Universities Libraries Consortium (EULC), Palestinian Library and Information Consortium (PALICO), and Sudanese Universities Library Consortium (SULC). EIFL was also active in Syria until

it ceased its operations there in 2011 because of the civil war. In addition, EIFL has programs for licensing of information databases, open access to information, copyright issues as they affect libraries, and public library innovation. It licenses discounted e-resources to institutions in eligible countries, and advocated for open access (OA) repositories and policies to mandate OA to peer-reviewed resources in Algeria (EIFL, n.d.).

One of the major motivations behind the establishment of EIFL was the creation of consortia so that libraries could take advantage of the buying power represented by larger numbers, especially for licensing of commercial databases. MENA libraries, whether or not in consortia that are EIFL members, know that if they are to have good access to digital information, research, and scholarly resources at relatively reasonable costs, they must be collectively organized. The Jordanian Academic Library Consortium saved its ten members three hundred eighty thousand dollars in fees for a single database after it began coordination of subscriptions (Ahmed & Suleiman, 2012, p. 142). Every consortium identified engages in some sort of coordinated action to obtain electronic information. But while undeniably the major impetus for the formation of these groups, it is by no means the only one. Other activities and representative organizations that engage in such include: creation of union catalogs or lists of holdings (Lebanese Academic Library Consortium), interlibrary lending and document delivery among member institutions (Library Information Web Access [LIWA] in the UAE), staff development and continuing education in the form of workshops, conferences, and other training events (almost all of the consortia engage in some level of staff development and continuing education), and unified purchasing of library management systems (Bibliothèque des Ressources Universitaires [BIRUNI], the Tunisia cooperative). Additionally, there is coordinated collections development (Israel College Consortium), exchange of duplicate materials (Palestinian Library and Information Consortium), joint storage of certain types of materials (Egyptian Universities Libraries Consortium), and setting of standards (Algerian Consortium of Higher Education and Scientific Research Establishments). Each consortium in the region does not engage in all of these activities, but the range represents relatively common programming found in similar institutions worldwide.

Two collaborative efforts – one that occurred more than a quarter century ago, the other more recently – are exemplary of valuable projects pursued by MENA consortia or consortia-like organizations. In the mid-eighties a group of Saudi Arabian military hospitals created a union list of serials and pursued active resource sharing. Committing to a "holder-of-record" system that assigned "each library the responsibility for specific (serial) titles . . . more complete journal holdings (were realized) within the kingdom" and "interlibrary loan

requests (were distributed) more evenly" (Brown & Blucker, 1987, pp. 324–325). In 2005, Turkey's ANKOS organization, arguably the most successful of consortia in the region, began considering the need for an electronic resource management system (ERM). Concluding it could better have its special needs met through local development of such a system, ANKOS built a sophisticated data management capability that is the basis for much of the sharing of digital resources in the country (Cukadar, Tuglu & Gurdal, 2013).

## Library Associations

Organization of libraries and librarians into formal associations addressing common issues and problems is among the earliest ways collaboration came about in the Middle East and North Africa. Thirty-three libraries, archival groups, or their equivalents were identified in MENA countries, and listed by country in Appendix 12.5. Undoubtedly there are more. Egypt is reported to have been the first country in the Arab world to form an association, in 1944. The Turkish Library Association (TLA) dates its founding to 1949. On the opposite end of the age continuum five others did not come into existence until this century. Numbers of members in these organizations range from a few hundred to approximately 4,000 in the Egyptian Association for Libraries and Information. Most of these associations have annual meetings. Among them are the Association of Jewish Libraries (AJL), the Turkish University and Research Libraries Association (ÜNAK), and the Lebanese Library Association (LLA). Some publish monographs and serials (TLA, JLA and ÜNAK), organize library weeks (TLA) and give out book awards (AJL). Their activities are typical of library associations everywhere. They engage in conference activity that is educational, sometimes political, and always social. Among events sponsored by Middle Eastern and North African library associations in 2014 were a gathering in April of the Saudi Library and Information Association marking World Book Day, the Jordanian Library and Information Association's conference in the fall focusing on the status and future prospects of human resource development, and the 25th conference of the Arab Federation for Libraries and Information held in Tunisia with the theme "Quality Standards in Libraries, Information Centers, and Archives." The associations represent the varied range of the profession: academic, national, public and special libraries, sometimes school libraries, and other more specialized constituents. Some are open to all who are interested in their missions, but most stipulate at least minimal requirements of working in a library or information organization or being a graduate of a program in library or information science. According to its survey response, the Iraqi Association of Information Technology requires "at

least a B.A. degree (in) Library and Information Science" or computing with academic credentials in other fields acceptable for those working in a library or computer lab.

There are two regional associations of note, the Arab Federation for Libraries and Information (AFLI) and the Special Libraries Association, Arabian Gulf Chapter. Founded in 1986 in Tunisia, AFLI is an independent, non-governmental and non-profit organization. Its goals include: strengthening "cooperation between libraries . . . in the Arab world;" developing and promoting "scientific research and studies in the field of libraries and information;" improving educational institutions that "prepare and qualify information specialists;" "standardizing terminology in the field;" encouraging "the establishment of national associations for librarians and information specialists;" and cooperating "with Arab and international organizations" (Arab Federation for Libraries and Information, n.d.). As the largest professional organization in the Arab World, it represents the interests of librarians in the region and organizes an annual conference each year in different Arab countries, which draws almost five-hundred librarians. AFLI also holds workshops, gives awards to outstanding librarians, and publishes a journal (*IALAM*) and a newsletter (*Sada al Ittihad*) (Soufi, 2010). The Special Library Association's (SLA) Arabian Gulf Chapter was founded in 1992 and has as its objectives: developing professional relationships and libraries in the region; organizing meetings and conferences for libraries and information specialists; planning and preparing educational programs such as workshops, lectures, meetings and conferences; and generally seeking the advancement of libraries, information centers, and the profession (Special Libraries Association Arabian Gulf Chapter, n.d.).

On the international scene the Arab Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (ARBICA), the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA), and the Middle East Librarians Association (MELA) play important roles in promoting cooperation in the region.

ARBICA has 56 members from sixteen Arab countries and operates under a constitution adopted in Seville in 1985. It carries out the policy and programs of the International Council on Archives (ICA) in the region and aims to strengthen cooperation within Arab countries (Arab Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives, n.d.).

IFLA offers individual reports on libraries and library activities – though not specifically on library cooperation – for all but a few MENA countries through an interactive map on its web site (International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions [IFLA], 2010). In 2007, IFLA established a Center for Arabic Speaking Libraries and Information Institutions at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. The Center is the permanent representative of IFLA/HQ for the

Arabic-speaking professional community and acts as a bridge between IFLA and all Arab libraries (Biblioteca Alexandrina, n.d.). It organizes regional conferences, for example the 2008 conference on the role of libraries in freedom of expression.[4] IFLA also organized its first regional IFLA conference in the Arab region in 2013 in Qatar in cooperation with AFLI and Qatar's Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage.[5]

MELA is a North American-based professional organization comprising mainly Middle East library specialists in the USA and Canada. MELA aims to facilitate communication and encourage cooperation among members with regards to the acquisition of Middle Eastern information resources and their bibliographic control. It publishes *MELA Notes: Journal of the Middle East Librarians Association*, and maintains a weblog called the MELA Notepad (Middle East Librarians Association, n.d.).

## Other Organizations and Institutions Promoting Library Collaboration

A number of international organizations play an important role in the development of library and information services in the MENA countries. Among them are the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) and the World Health Organization.

Founded in 1970 as "a Supra-Arab national body established to facilitate cooperation among various professional groups" (Ali, 1985, p. 69), ALECSO also aims to develop and promote documentation and library services in the region through its Department of Documentation and Information that serves as a depository of Arab publications with branches in almost all Arab countries (Ali, 1985, p. 70; Khafagi, 1989, p. 249).

Through its Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO) countries, WHO has been instrumental in facilitating access to information in 23 countries in the region by means of several initiatives. WHO EMRO has a library providing biomedical and public health information, and the Regional Office Library maintains a directory of medical libraries "in order to increase cooperation and collaboration among medical libraries in the Region as a prerequisite to develop and sustain the Eastern Mediterranean Medical Libraries Network (MedLibNet)."

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**4** Information about this conference can be accessed at http://www.bibalex.org/IFLA-libraries-tolerance08/

**5** Information about this conference can be accessed at http://www.ifla.org/node/7716.

(World Health Organization Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, n.d.). In addition, it developed the Virtual Health Sciences Library (VHSL) that substantially increased information sharing among member states. The VHSL provides online library services and health and biomedical information resources for health care professionals and maintains a union catalog of holdings of 43 health sciences libraries.[6] Thanks to the WHO's Health Information Network Access to Research Initiative (HINARI), researchers in several Eastern Mediterranean countries can get free (or reduced rate) access to medical literature through the network of Health Sciences Libraries (Al-Shorbaji, 2006).

The activities of associations and consortia are the most obvious demonstration of collaboration but there are numerous other national organizations in the Middle East and North Africa that promote and facilitate cooperation, listed by country in Appendix 12.6. Governmental entities, especially national libraries or ministries of culture and higher education, exert leadership for cooperative endeavors in many of the MENA countries. Turkey, for example, provides both high speed network and information services through its National Academic Network and Information Center (ULAKBIM), an R&D facility of the government-supported Turkish Scientific and Technological Research Council (TUBITAK). ULAKBIM licenses nation-wide online access to some key databases and e-journal packages such as Thomson Reuters's Web of Science and Elsevier's ScienceDirect on behalf of university libraries and research centers through its National Academic License for Electronic Resources (EKUAL) program (National Academic Network and Information Center, n.d.). More than half the total number of article downloads in Turkey come from e-journals licensed by ULAKBIM and the rest come through the ANKOS consortium.[7]

In some cases governments initiated or approved membership in EIFL to benefit from EIFL's information services. Algeria, Egypt, and Sudan are among them. Members of the Sudanese Research and Education Network (SudREN or SUIN), for example, can get free access to commercial e-resources thanks to a governmental agreement with EIFL (Sudanese Research and Education Network, n.d.). SudREN also offers network services to its members.

In addition to its EIFL membership, Egypt provides two other examples of organizations established by the government or related to it that are collaborative

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6 http://www.emro.who.int/information-resources/vhsl/

7 Data on the download statistics are partially available from ULAKBIM's annual reports (e.g., Ulusal, 2012). Nationally licensed resources by ULAKBIM through its EKUAL program cater to the 50%–55% of the needs of academia over the years. ANKOS reports its download statistics during its annual meetings.

in nature but strictly speaking are neither associations nor consortia: The Egyptian Libraries Network and the Egyptian Society for Culture and Development (formerly the Integrated Care Society or ICS). The latter was established in 1978 and has twelve library members, including public and school libraries and one for special needs. It engages in cooperative development of collections and offers staff development workshops and other events.

Other institutions that fall into the category of collaborative organizations that are government-related include the Iraqi Libraries Network, Jordan's King Abdullah II Center of Excellence, the Qatar Foundation through the Qatar National Library programs, Qatar's Hamad Medical Corporation, the Saudi Digital Library (SDL), and the collaborative efforts of King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) Library.

A relatively recent organization that focuses on a particular aspect of librarianship is the Information Literacy Network of the Gulf Region.[8] The network provides professional development activities in the Gulf and has organized three conferences and numerous workshops since its founding in 2005.

Another type of collaboration is less formal or functions largely in cyberspace. The Abu Dhabi Librarians Meetup[9] is an example of individuals in one Gulf emirate connecting for professional development or social reasons, while the larger, more elaborate Cybrarians site (The Arabic Portal for Librarianship and Information)[10] provides a vehicle for scholarly contributions and reports on library progress in the region.

The acquisition of an online integrated library management system from a single vendor has prompted formation of networks of libraries, and even consortia. The Tunisian cooperative BIRUNI began with installation of VTLS software and now encompasses over 240 libraries. LIWA in the UAE had its genesis in the decision of the country's three federal institutions – the Higher Colleges of Technology, United Arab Emirates University, and Zayed University – to purchase Innovative Interfaces Incorporated's system. Khurshid (2003) studied the Arabian Gulf region marketplace for library automation systems and found that the Horizon system of Dynix had been installed in 59 out of 81 libraries surveyed, enjoying 73% market share (34 in Saudi Arabia, 11 in the UAE, 10 in Kuwait, and 2 each in Bahrain and Oman). The success of the Horizon system was attributed to its strong Arabic and local support capabilities, the two major requirements in the region (Khurshid, 2003, pp. 228–229). The proliferation of

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8 http://ilnofthegulf.blogspot.com/

9 http://www.meetup.com/Abu-Dhabi-Librarians-Meetup/

10 http://www.cybrarians.org/

integrated library automation systems and the ability to cross-search several systems at once are likely to increase the demand for online access to the full-texts of journal articles, books and newspapers. The use of electronic document delivery (EDD) systems in the region was quite low before the widespread adoption of electronic journals and books (Al-Fadhli & Johnson, 2006), and the demand will increasingly be satisfied by some other means (e.g., pay-per-view) than by EDD systems alone.

The Arabic Union Catalog is an important regional collaboration that works across the entire region and engages in training and provision of technical assistance to libraries in a range of MENA countries. Established in 2006 by the King Abdulaziz Public Library with a commitment of funding for ten years, it is developing a unified index of holdings in Arabic through shared cataloging and the adoption of international standards (Arabic Union Catalog, n.d.). In November of 2011 the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) announced the addition of over a million records from the Arabic Union Catalog to its WorldCat database. According to OCLC (2011), providing links through WorldCat would expose "the resources of hundreds of Middle Eastern libraries to the worldwide community" (para. 4).

Finally, international programs from outside the region, but to which Middle Eastern and North African organizations and institutions – and their libraries – contribute, help to advance the collaborative process. Twenty MENA countries are represented in the World Digital Library, and they have added 2,201 items to the site as of November 2014 (World Digital Library, n.d.).[11] The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Global Open Access Portal shows library organizations in a number of the region's countries involved with its efforts to expand and enhance open access to information throughout the world (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, n.d.).

## Challenges, Obstacles and Possibilities

And yet, for all of the region's association activity, consortia, and seemingly genuine interest among many librarians in working together, progress toward realization of the full promise of cooperation in most MENA countries has been slow and fitful. It is interesting to note that decades after librarians in other parts of the world wrote about the value of cooperative endeavors, two of the

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11 The figure excludes 307 items added by non-MENA countries (i.e., Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan).

more recent MENA treatments of the subject still were focused on "potential" (Al-Harrasi & Al-Aufi, 2012) and on "opinions" about consortia (Sheshadri, Shivalingaiah & Manjunatha, 2011).

Surveys of individuals most involved with cooperative efforts in the Middle East and North Africa reveal continued concern with budgets, philosophical differences, organizational limitations, and discrepancies in academic training, skills, and workplace settings of staff. In some cases personal safety and security, given the wars in Iraq and Syria and civil unrest and rebellion in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Libya, Israel, Palestine, Tunisia, Yemen and elsewhere, were understandably of paramount consideration.

The current Archivist of the United States, David Ferriero, speaking from his experience in American libraries, observed that the problem with realizing meaningful creative collaborations is not technological barriers, but instead cultural, societal, and political ones. True collaboration, he suggested, is rare and there are huge obstacles to realizing it.[12] What are those obstacles? How might they be overcome? The authors have previously addressed these questions in separate presentations and publications. Scepanski saw distance, service orientation, funding sources, different types of clienteles, institutional and personal rivalries, and inertia as issues (Scepanski, 2001). Tonta, echoing Ferriero's comments, has written of the need for development of a culture of cooperation. Commitment, mutual understanding, consensus building, and patience are necessary, as are planning, organizational, and administrative skills, and requisite human and monetary resources (Tonta, 2001).

Library consortia, associations, and institutions with similar goals often face prodigious problems with bureaucracies in their countries. Associations, consortia, non-government organizations and other formal organizations in MENA nations, particularly in the smaller and younger countries of the Gulf, sometimes require a minimal number of citizens (not expatriates) as members before an entity can be officially recognized. With the dearth of trained librarians native to some of these countries, this is an almost insurmountable hurdle to legal establishment. Governmental approval recognizing an organization can take years. The three universities in UAE's LIWA consortium began more formal collaboration in 2001 but did not become officially sanctioned until 2007.

Rivalries, unfortunately, remain intractable. Spurr's 2007 report on the Iraqi archival and library situation indicates that Dr. Saad Eskander, director-general of the Iraqi National Library, is not "sanguine about cooperation . . . saying that

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12 Mr. Ferriero, Associate Provost for Libraries and University Librarian at Duke University at the time, conveyed these observations to Mr. Scepanski in conversation.

the hierarchical-mindedness instilled under Saddam remains in place, and that lateral, cooperative action is nearly impossible," and goes on to mention the view of Dr. Anis al-Rawi, Dean of the University of Baghdad's Science College for Women, that "competition not cooperation is the order of the day for Iraqi universities" (Spurr, 2007, Assistance Required section, para. 4). Further down the Gulf, a proposal by one of the authors for innovative – even groundbreaking – sharing of technical services staff among three institutions with a common funding source was thwarted not by librarians, but by administrators who feared loss of prestige and power.

Resource limitations always will be a reality for libraries, whether in the developed countries of the west, the emerging ones of the east, the wealthy of the Middle East, or the poor everywhere. Libraries and archival institutions always will have competition from elsewhere in society. While they should never cease to make the case for the importance of their work, they must band together and realize their greater strength in numbers.

Complicating adoption of a collaborative culture among libraries is what Sloan (1998) has termed "Common Assumptions about Resource Sharing." Among these common assumptions are that "smaller libraries 'raid' the collections of larger libraries" and that "smaller libraries are deluged by the volume of requests from larger libraries" (Sloan, 1998, p. 18). He subjected them and other strongly held beliefs to a detailed analysis of interlibrary loan activity among institutions who were members of a major resource sharing collaborative in the United States, the Illinois Library Computer Systems Organization (ILCSO). Among his surprising findings were that smaller libraries in the coalition were less likely to draw heavily on collections of the bigger members than were their brethren of similar size (Sloan, 1998). His study demonstrated that care should be exercised in assuming negative consequences of sharing resources among differing types and sizes of libraries.

In the past distance of institutions from one another might have been an impediment to cooperation but now would seem to be less of an issue. Joining together to license e-resources, for example, is not dependent upon proximity and there are other ways libraries can engage with each other from afar. Even two decades ago there was demonstration that large-scale collaboration at long-distance was feasible when three large systems of higher education in the United States, one of them more than 5,000 kilometers away from the others, pursued common cause on issues of acquisitions and access, copyright, distance education and library services, and staff development (Scepanski & von Wahlde, 1998). MENA countries might pursue a similar approach. Electronic theses and dissertations can easily be shared through interoperable institutional repositories of universities in a fashion similar to the WHO's Institutional

Repository for Information Sharing (IRIS).[13] Electronic resources can be licensed through national and/or regional consortia as is done by WHO's HINARI program or the EIFL initiatives mentioned earlier.

So beyond that which already is being accomplished in the region, what other activities might be pursued to advance a common cause? A program no longer a novelty among many western libraries but which has enhanced possibilities because of proven technology is sharing facilities for storage of print materials. With smaller numbers of books and journals in print form, and space on campuses perhaps at less of a premium than is the case with their western counterparts, devoting time, money, and effort to coordinating storage of publications may not be a priority for MENA institutions. But where library space might better be devoted to user services than to housing little used print material, it might be considered. For example, library space allocated to collections can be repurposed to what is commonly called "digital commons," an area of public access to a variety of online resources. Automated storage/retrieval systems, proven cost effective many years ago in the United States, could be an attractive investment for libraries willing to partner on constructing them.

Libraries in some MENA countries have approached technology implementation collaboratively. While surrendering some local autonomy and having to accept degrees of standardization, those willing to extensively integrate their processes and systems realize substantial gains in productivity. Others simply choose the same online system vendor to make sharing of catalogs and other functions simpler. An increasing number of libraries outside the region have turned to outsourcing their integrated library sytem ILS operations to realize greater efficiencies and financial benefit, something that might serve as example for some MENA libraries.

Trained, knowledgeable and skilled staff is the most important resource a library has, and among the most expensive. To the extent libraries can find ways to share costs of personnel, additional or improved services can be put in place. Information technology specialists, catalogers and others involved in technical services, reference librarians working extended hours or offering assistance online, all might be candidates for groups of libraries to jointly fund. Centralization of various staffing operations could enhance services offered and lower costs.

Distance education has existed in the region for more than a decade (Mohamed, 2005) and there are several open or virtual universities in MENA countries. Support of distance education through online library services might

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**13** http://apps.who.int/iris/

better occur in a collaborative rather than a competitive manner. Digitization of both course materials and valuable and rare information resources and the sharing of such via the web increasingly is one of the most important aspects of a library's purpose. However, the expense of doing so – in equipment and in personnel – is not inconsequential and cries out for cooperation.

In an area prone to both natural and man-made catastrophes, library planning for dealing with the impact of earthquakes, floods, wars and thievery on services, and how best to recover from such, is something eminently logical to do in coordination with other libraries. Disaster preparedness should be a major collaborative priority throughout the region.

Another innovative possibility focusing on efficiency and service, but one that would require confidence, commitment to a common vision, and most especially a willingness to take risks is interlibrary loan that sends needed books and journals to requesting institutions and then have them remain with the borrowing library until they are required at another partner. While radically upsetting all notions of ownership, it would not be impossible to implement, particularly at libraries – such as those that are publicly funded – whose sources of income are the same. While scanning and digital sharing of material might be preferred to transport of physical items, copyright restrictions could make continued use of traditional interlibrary loan necessary for some time to come. Moving items only when they are necessary would make this age-old arrangement more efficient.

In some places collaborative rethinking of libraries' clienteles, and the kinds of buildings provided to best serve them, is taking place. As indicated earlier, jointly-used facilities is not a new concept, but more communities are asking why not have the general public use portions or all of a university library building. Why not have school and public libraries sharing space in the same place?

The foregoing are but some suggestions and possibilities, unrealistic in some settings, bold in most, obvious in a few. To advance the cause of good library and information service, however, different thinking is essential. Critical questions need to be asked and answered if the promise of libraries working together is to be realized. Are libraries in the Middle East and North Africa willing to surrender some of their autonomy in the interest of the greater good of better and more comprehensive service? Are the publics the libraries serve and the authorities that fund those libraries willing to let them collaborate? Are the libraries willing to think broadly, viewing their constituencies more comprehensively and inclusively? Are the libraries of the Middle East and North Africa truly committed to collaboration?

# Forward Together or Falling Apart

At the conclusion of his paper on the preservation of scientific and cultural heritage in the Balkans, Tonta (2009) observed that cooperation "should not be seen as countries and institutions with relatively more resources and services 'helping out' the less fortunate ones" (p. 428). Instead, cooperation involves "working together to provide more developed and varied services" so that institutions that "cannot usually provide such services satisfactorily if they act alone" are able to do so as a result of 'interdependence' (Tonta, 2009, p. 428). Are libraries willing to embrace interdependence?

A 1998 article about academic library consortia opens with a famous quotation from the American statesman and revolutionary Benjamin Franklin: "We must all hang together," it says, "or assuredly we shall all hang separately" (Allen & Hirshon, 1998, p. 36). A collaborative approach to addressing the myriad of issues, opportunities, problems, and possibilities being faced by libraries at the end of the twentieth century was deemed not just necessary for realizing success in the extraordinarily complex world of scholarly information and research, but as essential to the survival of the millennially old institution that is the library. That observation is even more relevant today, and especially so in the fractious and fragile world of the Middle East. If the libraries of the region are to build on the heritage of their illustrious predecessors and again be among the centers of world knowledge, they will only do so by moving forward together.

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# Appendix 12.1: Library Consortia Questionnaire

Information about cooperation among libraries and librarians in the Middle East and North Africa is being sought for a book to be published next year under the editorial direction of faculty and students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Information and Library Science. Your assistance in answering as many of the questions below as possible is requested.

1a. Name of Consortium (in Native Language) _____
1b. Name of Consortium (in English)  _____

2. Consortium web address  _____

3. Year of establishment _____

4. Number of library members _____

5. Requirements to be a member (if any) _____

6. Address of headquarters

_____
_____

7. Frequency of meetings (for example: quarterly, twice a year, annually) _____

8. Types of activities (mark all that apply)
_____ a. Maintenance of a union list of member holdings
_____ b. Lending of books, journals, and other library material among members
_____ c. Joint storage of books, journals, and other library materials
_____ d. Joint licensing of digital databases
_____ e. Staff development conferences, meetings, or workshops
_____ f. Joint funding of staff shared among member institutions
_____ g. Cooperative development of library collections
_____ h. Other activities (please elaborate)

_____
_____

9. Contact person with email address _____

**PLEASE RESPOND TO:**
Jordan M. Scepanski
Jordan Wells Associates
Jordanwells@icloud.com

# Appendix 12.2: Library Associations Questionnaire

Information about cooperation among libraries and librarians in the Middle East and North Africa is being sought for a book to be published next year under the editorial direction of faculty and students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Information and Library Science. Your assistance in answering as many of the questions below as possible is requested.

1a. Name of Association (in Native Language)

_____

1b. Name of Association (in English)

_____

2. Association web address _____

3. Year of establishment _____

4. Number of current members (individuals) _____

5. Number of current members (institutions) _____

6. Address of headquarters

_____

_____

7. Frequency of meetings (for example: quarterly, twice a year, annually)_____

8. Types of activities

_____

_____

_____

9. Contact person with email address _____

**PLEASE RESPOND TO:**

Jordan M. Scepanski
Jordan Wells Associates
Jordanwells@icloud.com

# Appendix 12.3: Library Cooperation Questionnaire

Information about cooperation among libraries and librarians in the Middle East and North Africa is being sought for a book to be published next year under the editorial direction of faculty and students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Information and Library Science. Your assistance in answering as many of the questions below as possible is requested.

1a. Name of Organization (in Native Language)_____

1b. Name of Organization (in English) _____

2. Organization web address _____

3. Year of establishment _____

4. Number of participants _____

5. Requirements to be a member (if any) _____

6. Address of headquarters

_____

_____

7. Types of activities (mark all that apply)
_____ a. Maintenance of a union list of member holdings
_____ b. Lending of books, journals, and other library material among members
_____ c. Joint storage of books, journals, and other library materials
_____ d. Joint licensing of digital databases
_____ e. Staff development conferences, meetings, or workshops
_____ f. Joint funding of staff shared among member institutions
_____ g. Cooperative development of library collections
_____ h. Other activities (please elaborate)

_____

_____

_____

8. Contact person with email address

**PLEASE RESPOND TO:**

Jordan M. Scepanski
Jordan Wells Associates
Jordanwells@icloud.com

# Appendix 12.4: Library Consortia in the Middle East and North Africa

| Country | Name of the Library Consortium | Website |
|---|---|---|
| Algeria | Algerian Consortium of Higher Education and Scientific Research Establishments | |
| Egypt | Egyptian Universities Library Consortium (EULC) | http://www.eulc.edu.eg |
| Iran | ACNET | |
| | CONSIRAN | |
| Israel | Israeli College Consortium (ICC) | |
| | Israeli Inter-University Center for Digital Information Services (MALMAD) | http://malmad.iucc.ac.il/ |
| Jordan | Consortium of the Central Libraries of the Public Universities in Jordan | |
| Lebanon | Lebanese Academic Library Consortium (LALC) | http://lalc.lau.edu.lb/ |
| Palestine | Palestinian Library and Information Consortium (PALICO) | |
| Syria | Syrian Library Consortium | |
| Tunisia | Bibliothèque des Ressources Universitaires (BIRUNI) | http://www.biruni.tn/ |
| Turkey | Anatolian University Libraries Consortium (ANKOS) | http://www.ankos.org.tr |
| United Arab Emirates | eFada, Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in UAE | http://efada.ankabut.ac.ae/ |
| | Library Information Web Access (LIWA) | |
| | UAE Health Libraries Consortium (UAEHLC) | http://liwa.ac.ae/ |
| International | EIFL (Electronic Information for Libraries) | http://www.EIFL.net |

*Note:* Some consortia such as ACNET and PALICO listed above seem to have web sites available in the past but they were not accessible at the time of writing (September 2014).

# Appendix 12.5: Library Associations in the Middle East and North Africa

| Country/ Territory | Name of the Library Association | Website |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Algeria | Algerian Association of Librarians, Archivists, and Documentalists | |
| Bahrain | Bahrain Library Association | |
| Egypt | The Egyptian Association for Libraries and Information | http://www.elaegypt.com/ |
| | Egyptian Society for Libraries Association of School Libraries | |
| Iran | Iranian Library and Information Science Association (ILISA) | http://www.ilisa.ir/en/ |
| | Iranian Medical Library and Information Association | http://en.imla.ir |
| | The Union of Iranian Library and Information Science Student Associations (ADKA) | http://www.adka.blogfa.com/ post-1.aspx |
| | South Iran Medical Library Association | http://south.imla.ir |
| Iraq | Iraqi Association of Information Technology | http://www.iraqiait.com/ |
| | Iraqi Committee for Libraries and Information Sciences | |
| Israel | Israeli Association of Libraries and Information Centers | http://new.asmi.org.il/index. php?option=com_content&task= view&id=31&Itemid=54 |
| | Association of Jewish Libraries | http://www.jewishlibraries.org/ main/ |
| Jordan | Jordan Library and Information Association | http://www.jlia.org/en |
| Kuwait | Library and Information Association of Kuwait (LIAK) | |
| Lebanon | Lebanese Library Association | http://www.llaweb.org/ ?lang_id=1& |
| Libya | Libya Library Association | |
| | Libyan Association for Libraries, Information, and Archives | |
| Mauritania | Mauritanien Association of Librarians, Archivists, and Documentalists | |
| Morocco | Association Nationale des Informatistes (ANI) | http://ani.org.ma/ |

(continued)

| Country/ Territory | Name of the Library Association | Website |
|---|---|---|
| Oman | Omani Library Association | http://www.omanlib.org/ |
| Palestine | Palestinian Library and Information Association | |
| Saudi Arabia | Saudi Library and Information Association (SLIA) | http://www.slia.org.sa/ |
| Sudan | Sudanese Association of Libraries and Information (SALI) | http://puka.cs.waikato. ac.nz/cgi-bin/sali/library |
| Syria | Library Association of the Syrian Arab Republic | |
| Tunisia | Association Tunisienne des Documentalistes, Bibliothécaires et Archivistes (ATDBA) | http://www.adbs.fr/atdba -association-tunisienne-des- documentalistes-bibliothecaires-et- archivistes-48562.htm?RH=REPAN_ ORGASSOS#sthash.bVSE1706.dpuf |
| | Tunisian Federation of the Associa- tions of the Friends of Books and Libraries (FENNABIL) | |
| Turkey | Turkish Librarians' Association | http://www.kutuphaneci. org.tr/ |
| | University and Research Librarians' Association | http://www.unak.org.tr/en/ |
| | Association of School Librarians | http://www.okd.org.tr |
| | Turkish Archivists Association | http://www.arsivder.org.tr/ |
| Yemen | Yemeni Association for Libraries and Information | |
| Regional | Arab Federation for Libraries and Information (AFLI) | http://www.arab-afli.org; http:// al-tofolah-barka.blogspot.com/ 2010/12/arab-federation-for- libraries-and.html http://arabiangulf.sla.org |
| | Libraries Associations Arabia Special Libraries Association, Arabian Gulf Chapter | |
| International | Arab Regional Branch of the Interna- tional Council on Archives (ARBICA) | http://www.ica.org/1998/about- arab-regional-branch-arbica/ about-arbica.html |
| | International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) | http://www.ifla.org |
| | Middle East Library Association | http://www.mela.us/ |

# Appendix 12.6: Other Organizations and Institutions Promoting Library Collaboration in the Middle East and North Africa

| Country/ Territory | Organization/Institution | Website |
|---|---|---|
| Egypt | Egyptian Libraries Network | http://www.egyptlib.net.eg/Site/Home.aspx |
| | Egyptian Society for Culture and Development | http://www.escd.org.eg/ |
| Iraq | Egyptian Libraries Network | http://www.iraqlib.net/ |
| Jordan | King Abdullah II Center of Excellence | http://www.kace.jo/Default.shtm |
| Morocco | Moroccan Catalog (Catalog du Maroc) | http://muc.deepwebaccess.com/mucsearch-fr/ |
| Qatar | Qatar Foundation | http://www.qf.org.qa/explore/heritage-centers/qatar-national-library |
| | Hamad Medical Corporation | http://www.hmc.org.qa/en/hcp/medical_resources/journals_and_scholarly_publications/journals_and_scholarly_publications.aspx |
| Saudi Arabia | Saudi Digital Library | http://sdl.edu.sa/SDLPortal/EN/ |
| | King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) | http://www.kaust.edu.sa/kaust-library.html |
| | MODA Hospital Library Cooperative | |
| Sudan | Sudanese Research and Education Network (SudREN - fka SUIN) | http://www.suin.edu.sd/index.php/en/ |
| Tunisia | Tunisian Federation of the Associations of the Friends of Books and Libraries | |
| Turkey | National Academic Network and Information Center (ULAKBIM) | http://www.ulakbim.gov.tr |
| United Arab Emirates | Abu Dhabi Librarians Meetup | http://www.meetup.com/Abu-Dhabi-Librarians-Meetup/ |
| Regional | Arab Federation for Libraries and Information (AFLI) | |
| | Arabic Union Catalog | http://www.aruc.org |
| | Cybrarians (Arabic Portal for Librarianship and Information) | http://www.cybrarians.org/en/ |

(continued)

| Country/ Territory | Organization/Institution | Website |
|---|---|---|
| | Information Literacy Network of the Gulf Region | http://ilnofthegulf.blogspot.ae/ |
| International | Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) | |
| | World Health Organization, the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean countries (WHO EMRO) | http://www.emro.who.int |