

PRINTING AND PUBLISHING SUB-COMMITTEE

Report of the first Printing and Publishing Sub-committee meetings held on 8 and 9 August 2006 at the Second Islamic Manuscript Conference, University of Cambridge, UK.

Members present: Mr. Omar Ba Jukhaif, Dr. Alba Fedeli, Dr. Omar Khalidi, Dr. Ayman Fuad Sayyid (Secretary), Dr. Ayman Shihadeh (Head).

The committee, first of all, felt that it is vital to establish and refine its own aims as clearly and exactly as possible, which would allow it to narrow its scope and set concrete and achievable targets that would serve the Association's work with regard to Islamic manuscripts. One difficulty which arises here stems mainly from the breadth and complexity of the scope suggested by the rubric 'publishing', which could easily undermine the committee's focus on manuscripts specifically. Moreover, the nature of the relation between the committee's activities and scholarly 'users' of published texts, and the extent to which these activities should become involved in the different particular subject areas of the latter, should be clarified. It was decided that this matter should be discussed further, and that suggestions from other members of TIMA would be considered.

Notwithstanding the above considerations, the committee also discussed different activities that TIMA may engage in with regard to printing and publishing. First, it discussed whether it would be worthwhile to establish a database of publishers of critical editions, facsimiles and digital copies of manuscripts. It was concluded that such work would be of limited benefit, and can indeed be achieved in another way, referred to below.

The committee recommends that TIMA engages in two main types of activity with respect to publishing:

- I. The first is to set up an online catalogue of published copies of manuscripts, including facsimiles and copies in digital format, whether on CD-ROMs or on the internet. Copies in microform will not be included. With adequate online search and query facilities, the catalogue will also make details of publishers available to users. The catalogue will form a valuable research tool for a broad section of the scholarly community, including those working on Islamic manuscripts and those studying different aspects of Islamic history and culture and working with primary textual sources. As yet, no similar catalogue is known to exist.
- II. Secondly, the committee discussed the possibility of engaging in the actual publication of texts, both in critical editions and in manuscript facsimile and digital formats, or in supporting such activity. It was noted that the publication of texts should actively involve users specialising in different subjects, as well as experts in manuscripts. In this regard, the committee suggested the consideration of two main types of activity.
 - 1) Commissioning extensive manuscript and textual surveys according to subject area and period. In a way, this will continue with the work already started by Fuat Sezgin, but

with concentration on key subject areas. A committee of experts in these subject areas will have the task of identifying gaps in published texts and the appropriate scope for the survey.

- 2) In agreement with different libraries, TIMA may also publish series of critical editions and/or digital copies of manuscripts, either by subject area or by collection/library.

Ayman Shihadeh
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