

**The Chester Beatty Library Seals Project  
Final Report  
19 September 2011**

In November 2009, TIMA kindly awarded the Chester Beatty Library a grant of £5,000 to enable the Library to establish an online, interactive database of seal impressions found in Islamic manuscripts. We are pleased to announce that the database was officially launched on 31 August 2011.

The grant application stated that the database would in fact be fully functioning by the end of December 2010, with 100 seals uploaded to the site. The eight-month delay in completing the database was due to the heavy workload of CBL staff during 2010. However, when launched the database included 150 seal impressions and that number will increase steadily over the coming months.

Seal impressions provide valuable information on a manuscript's history, usually the names of subsequent owners of the manuscript. Each 'Select a Seal' page of the site contains images of twenty seal impressions. Clicking on any one image brings the visitor to a page on which are fields to record the date found on the seal or, if there is no date, to suggest one; to transcribe, transliterate and translate the text of the seal; to record the shape of the seal; to suggest other sources of the same seal; and to make any other relevant comments. Before 'going live' all information is reviewed and to this end anyone inputting information is required to provide a name and e-mail address so that he/she may be contacted if a query regarding the information offered arises.

A zoom feature allows close inspection of the text of each seal (although the images are generally large enough and clear enough to be read easily without zooming in on them). There is a link to a photograph of the full folio on which the seal appears and, where available, also a link to the catalogue entry for the manuscript in which it appears. All images can be downloaded or printed out, allowing individuals to compile their own specialist collection of seal impressions.

Both 'simple' and 'advanced' searches of the database are possible and can be made in either Arabic or Roman script (although with the exception of the 'other' field of the search page which accepts only Roman script). However, at the moment, a fully transliterated search entry finds only fully transliterated data and likewise an untransliterated search entry finds only untransliterated data. But as



2002

Caisleán Átha Cliath  
Baile Átha Cliath 2  
Éire

Dublin Castle  
Dublin 2  
Ireland

teil | tel  
+353 1 407 0750

facs | fax  
+353 1 407 0760

r-phost | e-mail  
info@cbl.ie

suíomh idirlín |  
website  
www.cbl.ie

Stiúirthóir agus  
Leabharlannaí |  
Director and Librarian  
Fionnuala Croke

Bord na nIonntaobhaithe |  
Board of Trustees  
Cathaoirleach | Chairman  
Dr. T.P. Hardiman  
Ionntaobhaithe | Trustees  
Sir Marc Cochrane  
Mr Dermot Desmond  
Mrs Joan Duff  
Professor Sean Freyne  
Ms Caroline Gray  
Professor Kathleen James-  
Chakraborty  
Mrs Madeleine O'Sullivan  
Ms Fiona A. Ross  
Professor Roger Stalley

most searches will involve only a single word or two, searching both forms should not be overly bothersome. (Agreeing to a less than ideal situation was necessary for a few minor features of the database in order to keep within budget; however, there is the option to adjust all such features in the future should further funds become available.)

A User Guide, an Abbreviations page and a Bibliography page are also included on the site.

Although the database currently includes only seals from the Library's own collections, we are eager to include seals from other collections as well, as long as the correct permission to do so and photographs are provided.

The database provides a convenient means by which scholars and students may find or share information on seals and as such it should prove a highly useful resource for anyone working on Islamic manuscripts.

The database can be accessed directly at [www.cbl.ie/islamicseals](http://www.cbl.ie/islamicseals) or through the Islamic Collections page of the Library's website.

We would like to express our sincere thanks to TIMA for its kind support of this project. Without TIMA's generous funding, this project would definitely not have been possible.



Elaine Wright  
Curator of the Islamic Collections  
Project



Elizabeth Omidvaran  
Assistant for the Arabic Manuscripts



2002

Caisleán Átha Cliath  
Baile Átha Cliath 2  
Éire

Dublin Castle  
Dublin 2  
Ireland

teif | tel  
+353 1 407 0750

facs | fax  
+353 1 407 0760

r-phost | e-mail  
info@cbl.ie

suíomh idirlín |  
website  
www.cbl.ie

Stiúrthóir agus  
Leabharlannai |  
Director and Librarian  
Fionnuala Croke

Bord na nIontaobhaithe |  
Board of Trustees  
Cathaoirleach | Chairman  
Dr. T.P. Hardiman  
Iontaobhaithe | Trustees  
Sir Marc Cochrane  
Mr Dermot Desmond  
Mrs Joan Duff  
Professor Sean Freyne  
Ms Caroline Gray  
Professor Kathleen James-  
Chakraborty  
Mrs Madeleine O'Sullivan  
Ms Fiona A. Ross  
Professor Roger Stalley