JISC

Digital Resources for Islamic Studies

Introduction

JISC's innovative digitisation programme is opening up access to a wide range of rare and important Arabic manuscripts and Islamic Studies resources.

The projects detailed here cover hundreds of years, dozens of subjects and languages and a great many media. There are manuscripts dating from the 14th century to the 21st century, from all over the Islamic world. They are written in many different scripts and contain beautiful illuminations, as well as having significant intellectual value. Alongside extremely early copies of the Koran there are manuscripts encompassing every subject from studies in law, literature, science and mysticism, to medical textbooks, to modern PhD theses.

Although much excellent work has been done in the UK to digitise medieval manuscripts like Psalters, books of hours and bestiaries, Middle Eastern manuscript culture has received less attention. Such

material is often hard to transliterate and study, yet UK organisations hold rich and valuable collections and there is great and increasing demand for access to them. Most notably, the government recognised the importance of understanding Islamic culture and the need for UK colleges and universities to play a leading role in providing access to and studying Islamic texts when it designated Islamic Studies a strategically important subject in June 2007.

JISC responded by commissioning the University of Exeter to investigate scholarly demand for electronic resources within Islamic Studies. The study revealed that whilst the UK has many fine manuscripts within its educational institutions, and a body of scholars who are keen to make use of online resources, frustratingly, few of these manuscripts are easily accessible and in many cases it was difficult to find out what manuscripts existed.

The digitisation projects detailed in this booklet will lead the way in addressing these issues. As well as the advantages that accrue from making such a wide range of material freely available, the projects will bring further benefits in providing a strong platform for further expansion. The developments in catalogue creation and the creation of searchable metadata, accompanied by innovations in techniques for transliterating the many different scripts in the manuscripts, will all provide a base for continuing wide exposure of the Islamic heritage held within British institutions.

www.jisc.ac.uk/islamdigi

Illuminated page with angel from a magnificent copy of the ʿAjaib ʿal-makhluqāt' by Zakariyā ibn Muhammad Qazwini, dated 1566. © Cambridge University Library.

The DigiIslam report

DigiIslam is the first comprehensive survey of scholars and researchers in Islamic Studies in the UK relating to their online teaching and research requirements.

The study was set up in response to a request from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) that JISC review the digitised resources that users require for Islamic studies within higher education and beyond.

JISC commissioned a team from the University of Exeter to undertake this study from March to May 2008. The researchers used a mixture of questionnaires, focus group discussions,

in-depth telephone interviews and surveys of current resources (including the availability of e-books) to ascertain what existing materials users valued most highly and what new resources they would most like to be able to access.

The final report **'Review of User Requirements for Digitised Resources in Islamic Studies'** (May 2008) discovered that current resources are widely used, but that scholars were keen to see more open-access materials created. Most notably, there was enthusiastic support for the idea of digitising the Islamic manuscript catalogues of British educational institutions. It was felt this would not only be valuable for university staff and students, but more importantly also open up resources that were little known outside academia to the wider Muslim community.

In response, the report recommended that a National Gateway into Islamic Studies be created, including a database

- UK Government designated Islamic Studies a strategically important subject in June 2007 and asked HEFCE to develop a programme to support this field of study

- 90.6% of respondents to the survey said that they already use online resources for Islamic Studies

- Four out of five respondents had access to current journals online. Seven out of ten were able to use major online reference works to access them

Website:
http://projects.exeter.ac.uk/digislam

**Launch date:** Available now

Access: Open Access

Lead organisation: University of Exeter

Summary: The first comprehensive report into the online teaching and research requirements of UK Islamic Studies scholars and researchers

of primary texts, a full digitised set of UK Islamic manuscript catalogues, electronic versions of Islamic studies PhDs and an open-access repository for e-prints in Islamic studies.

Many of these recommendations have already been followed – as shown by the exciting digitisation projects detailed elsewhere in this booklet.

UNIVERSITY OF
EXETER
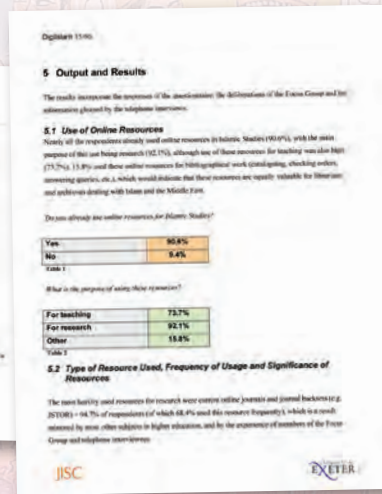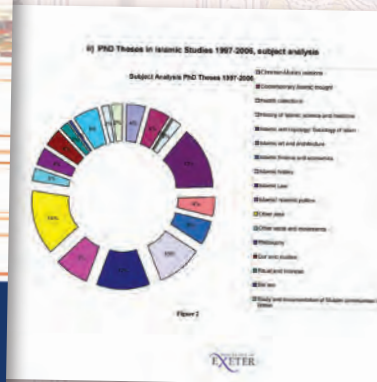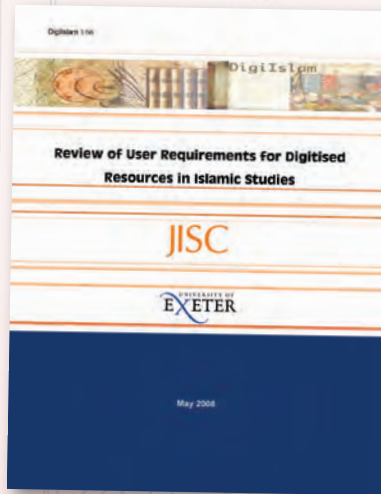
> **"**I strongly believe that it is of an immense importance to digitise the catalogue of Islamic manuscripts available and in any language, as at the moment they are just a lost treasure, and an enormous volume of test-metadata that is unsearchable by students who may not be aware of their existence or how to access them.**"**

(Anonymous) questionnaire response from the DigiIslam report

BRITISH LIBRARY

Islamic Studies PhD theses

A new rich vein of knowledge relating to Islamic Studies has been opened up with the assembly of an online collection of almost 1,000 PhD theses.

The 971 theses represent work from 97 separate educational institutions, gathered together for the first time. As a result, material that was previously only available through individual libraries and archives is now accessible to all. The theses can be downloaded in full, immediately and free of charge from the British Library's searchable electronic theses system.

Within the collection are papers on Islamic law, history, politics, finance, anthropology, sociology and gender studies, as well as numerous studies on Muslim communities and representations of Islam in the UK. These latter include such diverse studies as an in-depth analysis of British attitudes to Islamic aspirations during the high tide of the British Empire (from 1878 to 1914); an exploration of how Islam is presented in UK broadsheets, including how newspapers link the Islamic faith with violence, terrorism and unrest; and a look at the difficult experiences Muslim councillors have undergone while involved in local politics in the UK.

Taken together, the 971 theses also paint a unique picture of trends within UK scholarship. It's possible, for instance, to trace a growing concern with jihad and terrorism in more recent theses, while fewer papers are being written specifically about the British Empire now than in the mid to late 20th century. They also provide insights into the early work of a number of students who have the potential to go on to become leading researchers.

The documents are available from the British Library's EThOS service, which provides open access to theses from UK universities.
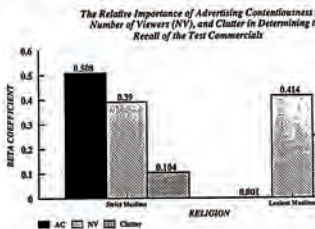
- The scanning process took seven months from start to finish
- The work was carried out thanks to the combined resources of JISC and The British Library
- The collection represents just under half of the 2,000 Islamic Studies PhDs created between 1997 and 2006

Website: http://ethos.bl.uk and search on 'Islamic Studies'

Launch date: Available now

Access: Open Access

Lead organisations: The British Library

Summary: Almost 1,000 PhD theses in the field of Islamic Studies available for free download

Digitisation of resources, including PhD theses, is seen as a priority area for those involved in our Islamic Studies Network. This valuable collection will help meet this need and will enable scholars to access the latest research in the field.

Lisa Bernasek, Higher Education Academy Academic Coordinator for the Islamic Studies Network

Figure 13

The Relative Importance of Advertising Contentiousness, Number of Viewers (NV), and Clutter in Determining the Recall of the Test Commercials

The relative importance of factors, as established by ... relating to Hypothesis 1, stems from the arguments sug... the development of this hypothesis. However, to gain ... understanding of what was suggested in Hypothesis 1, ... further statistical tests were run for measuring the au... recall under different combinations of the mediating ...

CHAPTER FIVE.

SECTION ONE. PROPHETHOOD, THE ... THE ANGEL, THE MESSENGER AN... PROPHET.

5.1.1. Introduction.

So far we have been concerned with the meaning of Islam an... Qur'ān, Sunnah and different sects. In this chapter, we propose to... issue of messengership. A first section will set the stage for this ... addressing the meaning and differences obtaining between Nabī and... and Ṣaḥīfah; Mu'jizah and Karāmah and Mu'jizah and Siḥr. The ... will be primarily concerned with a discussion of the nature of the ... prophets.

The history of prophethood has been marked by the oppo... encountered. Such a situation is well documented in the Qur'ān: 'Ev...

... been shown on Bahrain TV. Table 6 shows the commer... in this experiment.

Table 6
... commercials used in the experiment of the pilot st...

BRAND	CODE
TEST COMMERCIALS	
Pepsi Cola (Soft drink)	T1
Seven-Up (Soft drink)	T2
FILLER COMMERCIALS	
Lipton (Tea)	F1
Raid (Insect killer spray)	F2
Tide (Powder soap)	F3
Chiklettes (Chewing gum)	F4

... The Experimental Films

... examine the effects of the mediating factors, two ... were made up, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Chart 1: How to Setup a Takaful Operation

(1) Investor(s) → Taka...

(2) Decision is made to establish a Takaful Operatio...

(3) Setup the Sharī'ah Board → Determi... Products, ... Sta...

(4) Deter...

(5) Get the Approval of the Sharī'ah Board for the Takaful ...

(6) Get the Regulatory Approval for the Model, Basic Concept and Str...
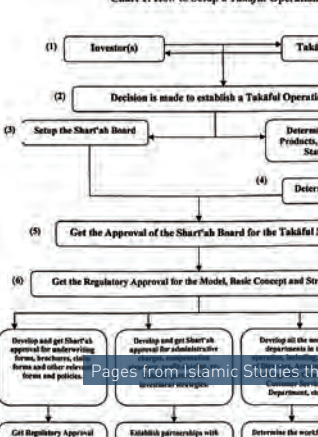
is frequently mentioned.(50) The story relates how this crow... was sent as a gift to the Caliph al-Ma'mūn by the ruler of Yemen... according to some, or of India according to others. It was ... accompanied by a letter the contents of which never became know... On arrival it was kept in a cage by the Qāḍī Yaḥyā ibn Akthan,... (died 242 A.H.) (Fig. 44)(51) The narrator of the tradition ... quoted as saying: "One day I visited the Qāḍī and saw the bird... in the cage. Terribly frightened I asked the Qāḍī about its me... ing, but the Qāḍī advised me to ask the bird. Then I asked th... bird; 'Who are you', and it answered in a clear voice:

'I am the zāgh Abū 'Ajes, the son of the lion and the lioness.

I love wine and sweet basil, perfume and wine.

Be not afeared of my quarrelsomeness nor cautious — least I attack.

Two possessions I have highly esteemed at weddings and festive days,

A hump at my back bereft of plumage, ...

Oxford and Cambridge Islamic Manuscript Catalogues Online

The Oxford and Cambridge Islamic Catalogues Online project aims to greatly improve scholarly access to the valuable Islamic texts held in the Bodleian Library Oxford and Cambridge University Library.

The Bodleian Library and Cambridge University Library contain approximately 10,000 Islamic texts between them. The manuscripts cover a broad range of subjects including literature, religion, philosophy, poetry, mathematics, astronomy and medicine. Amongst them are many early items and rare works of scholarly significance.

At present, even the simplest enquiries about these world-class collections require the mediation of senior curatorial staff who are able to negotiate the current complex cataloguing systems. Cambridge currently offers the catalogues in basic PDF form, but they are not easy to navigate since they have complicated numbering systems, indexes that are of limited value and they also use a confusing variety of transliteration conventions. Oxford, meanwhile, relies on print catalogues and card indexes. Many of these have extremely complex reference systems, including one written in Latin.

The project will rationalise, simplify and open up the catalogues to wider access with 10,000 basic manuscript descriptions that will be freely available and searchable online. These basic descriptions will also provide a framework for future enhancements and the inclusion of more details about individual manuscripts.

Website: www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/bodley/library/specialcollections/projects/ocimco

Launch date: Early 2011

Access: Open Access

Lead organisations: The Bodleian Library, Oxford and Cambridge University Library

Summary: A fully searchable, easy-to-use and expandable online catalogue of Oxford and Cambridge's large collection of Islamic manuscripts

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

Bodleian Library
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD

Any project which has as one of its major aims the republishing and updating of these catalogues would have my enthusiastic support. It would provide a much needed resource for Islamic studies scholars and students in the UK and elsewhere.

Prof Robert Gleave, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies

Illuminated page from the 'Shahnama' of Firdausi, written in tal'iq script, dated from the 16th or early 17th century. Presented to Cambridge University Library by the Directors of the East India Company, 1806. © Cambridge University Library.

- The project will put in place a text-encoding schema that can be extended to accommodate more detailed descriptions, transcriptions and digital images

- There will be a web-based interface with features developed in consultation with the academic user community, giving access to predefined searches and browseable views based on these searches

- The project will make use of the Digital Asset Management System (DAMS) currently in use for digital library projects within Oxford

A laserwort plant. MS. Arab. d. 138 (fol. 31b). © Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

Leaf from a page of the 'Diwan al-Hamasa' of Abu Tammām Habib ibn Aws Dated 1172, from the Burckhardt collection. © Cambridge University Library.

The Virtual Manuscript Room

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

The Virtual Manuscript Room makes a collection of beautiful and internationally important material available to a global audience of scholars and interested parties.

The resource will present online full facsimiles of extremely valuable manuscripts from The Mingana Collection held at the University of Birmingham. Most of the original material for this collection was gathered by one man – Alphonse Mingana – during the 1920s and 1930s, with money donated by the Cadbury family. He bought materials from all over the Middle East and the collection contains more than 3,000 manuscripts written in at least eleven different languages dating from the 6th to the early 20th century. In it there are many unique items including ancient versions of the Koran and a vast resource of Islamic texts, as well as priceless manuscripts relating to the history of the Syrian church.

Until recently, this extraordinary range of handwritten books and its wonderful examples of Middle Eastern art and bookmaking was housed

Virtual Manuscript Room Collections: Mingana – Persian 8. © University of Birmingham.

Website: www.vmr.bham.ac.uk

Launch date: Available now

Access: Mostly Open Access

Lead organisation: University of Birmingham

**Summary:** An open access online presentation of manuscripts from the valuable Mingana Collection

away from the main university in Selly Oak and was not easy to access. It has since been moved to the University of Birmingham's Special Collections Building, while the Virtual Manuscript Room distributes access to the manuscripts and related materials as widely and efficiently as possible. There are currently 71 manuscripts available and there are plans to deposit many more. Other scholars will also be encouraged to add their own complementary resources.

The collection is unique in its range. It covers all the cultures of the Middle East with a particularly strong collection in Islamic Arabic and Christian Arabic. The Syriac manuscript collection is one of the best in the world.

Peter Robinson, Senior Research Fellow, University of Birmingham

- The Mingana collection contains more than 3,000 manuscripts in at least eleven languages, dating from the 6th to the 20th century CE

- Among these there are 2,000 Arabic Islamic manuscripts. These include a fragmentary Qur'an, written in kufic script, which has recently been dated as possibly coming from the end of the seventh century, making it as old as the oldest Yemeni manuscript

- Other works in Islamic include further copies of the Qu'ran, Qur'an commentaries and manuscripts relating to Hadith, law, literature, science and mysticism

- There are also 660 Syriac and Karshuni (Arabic in Syriac characters) Christian manuscripts and 270 Arabic Christian manuscripts

- Alongside these, there are examples of Armenian, Coptic, Georgian, Greek, Hebrew, Persian, Samaritan and Sanskrit manuscripts

- As well as investing heavily in original material, Alphonse Mingana had copies made of many texts that he was unable to purchase outright. A number of these have become extremely valuable too because the originals have since been lost

- All metadata created by the Virtual Manuscript Room will be placed on an RSS feed to allow other scholars to create their own systems for interacting with that data. They will also be able to add material from other sources to the manuscript room (if they create metadata for that material following the protocols used by the Virtual Manuscript Room).
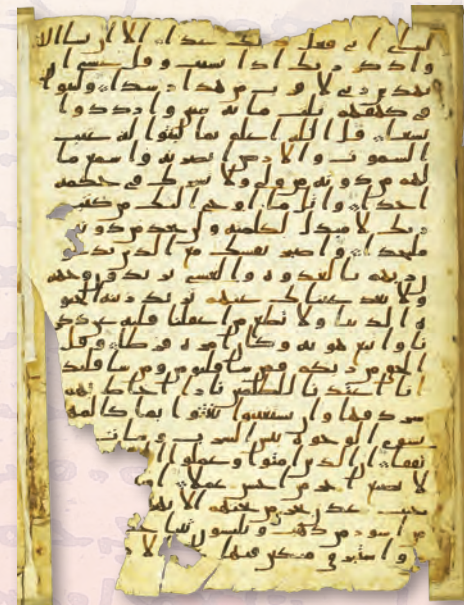
A very early fragmentary Qur'an, written in kufic script. Recently redated as possibly end seventh century, and as old as the oldest Yemeni manuscripts. Virtual Manuscript Room Collections: Islamic Arabic 1572. © University of Birmingham.
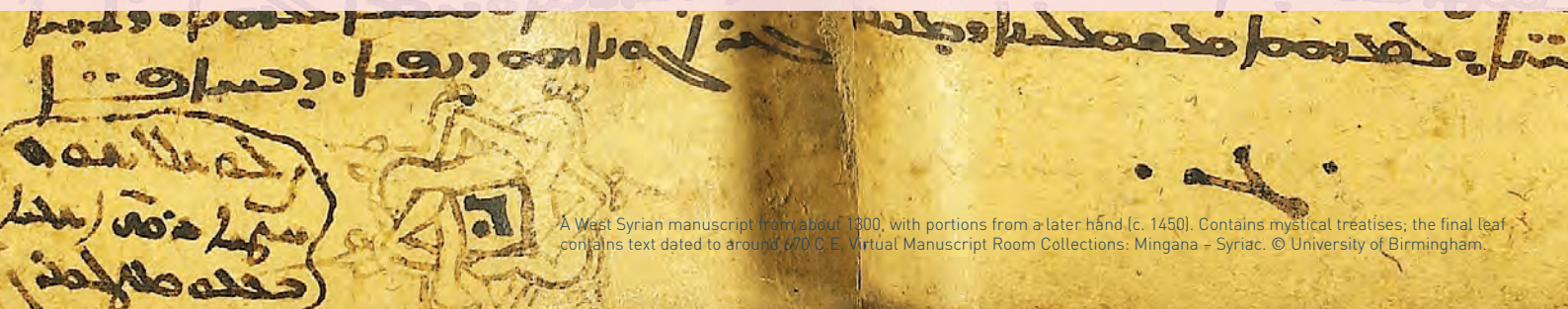
A West Syrian manuscript from about 1300, with portions from a later hand (c. 1450). Contains mystical treatises; the final leaf contains text dated to around 670 C.E. Virtual Manuscript Room Collections: Mingana – Syriac. © University of Birmingham.

Wellcome Arabic Manuscript Cataloguing Project

The Wellcome Library, Bibliotheca Alexandrina, and King's College London have formed a partnership to create a free fully searchable and scalable online catalogue of 500 chiefly medical manuscript books written in Arabic and preserved in the Wellcome Library. The catalogue and digitised images will be available on a dedicated website hosted by the Bibliotheca Alexandrina.

Another aim of this joint project is to create a freely available cataloguing tool, which will enable remote cataloguing and access to the digitised images as well as exchange of metadata. The cataloguing tool can be adapted in the future to create image-linked descriptions of the

manuscript books written in other Asian languages. The cataloguing tool is based on the methodology designed by N. Serikoff to catalogue the Haddad collection of Arabic manuscripts preserved in the Wellcome Library. The data will be stored in the ENRICH TEI metadata schema. This tool will also be adopted by the Oxford and Cambridge Islamic Catalogues Online project.

The Wellcome collection of Arabic manuscripts contains items dating from the 14th to the 20th century and created all over the Islamic world, stretching from Syria to Southeast Asia. Although the core of the collection are works dealing with medical issues and magic, there are many works on other aspects, such as popular theology, various beliefs, travel and history which no doubt will be of interest for the researchers of Islamic culture. Along with works created by Muslim authors, there is a significant proportion of works written in Arabic, which

Website: http://library.wellcome.ac.uk/arabicproject.html

Launch date: Early 2011

Access: Open Access

Lead organisations: The Wellcome Library, Bibliotheca Alexandrina and King's College London

Summary: 500 manuscripts relating to Arabic medicine, digitised and accompanied by pioneering search facilities

originated from the Eastern Christian religious communities.

The manuscripts themselves as physical items are also of no small interest for book historians, researchers in Islamic arts and crafts, conservators, calligraphers and the general public interested in medieval handwritten books of the Middle East.

Wellcome MS Arabic 478, folio 1: Magma 'al-Manāfi 'al-badaniyya (Compendium of what profits the Body), by Diyā' ad-Din abu Muhammad Àbd Allāh b. Ahmadal-Malaqi b. al-Baitār, 18th century. © The Wellcome Library.

wellcome library

wellcome collection
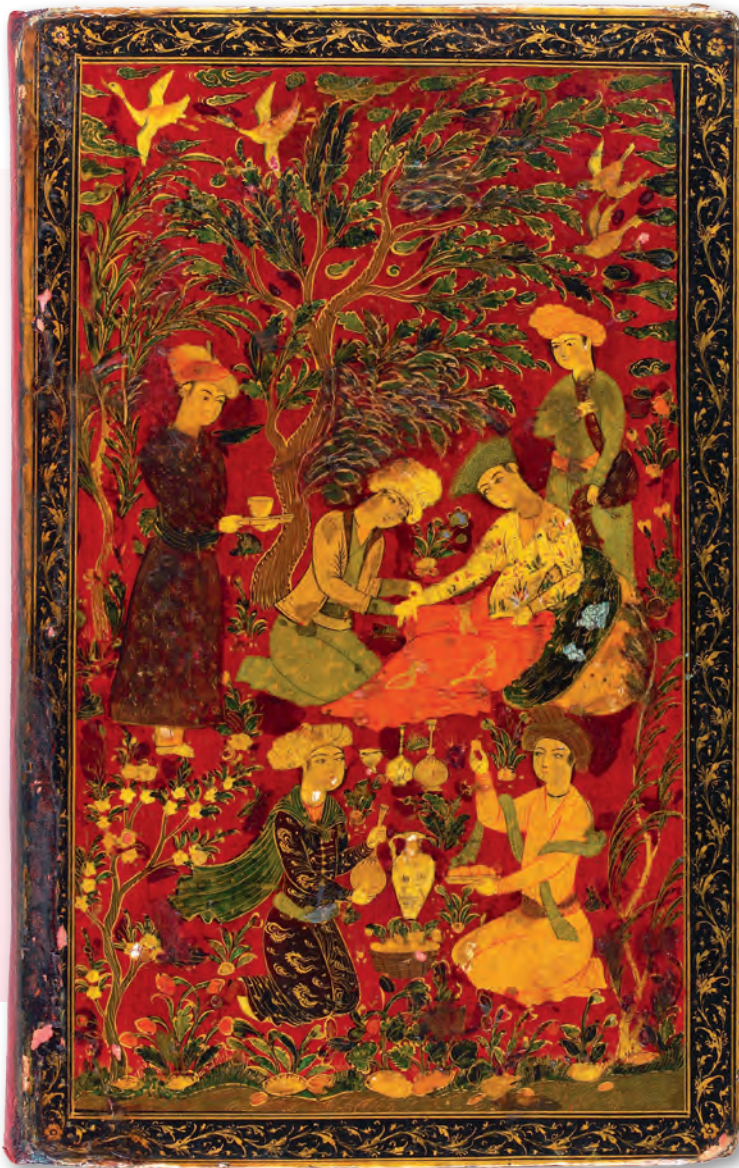
> " *The core audience for the digital resource are Islamic studies specialists, in particular scholars of Arabic medicine, science and history. Also benefiting from greater access to these texts are conservators, calligraphers, museum workers and others interested in ancient manuscripts as objects.* "

Christy Henshaw, Digitisation Project Manager, Wellcome Library

- The project will create approximately 75,000 full-colour images of the manuscripts in the collection

- All images will be put online under the Creative Commons Licence so that they can be reused and embedded in teaching materials, presentations and publications (providing such uses are fully attributed and done on a non-commercial basis)

- The cataloguing tool will be open source and therefore freely available to any who want to adapt the software for their own use

Wellcome MS Arabic 155: al-qanun Fi-T-Tibb [Canon of Medicine], by Avicenna. Binding board of manuscript of Avicenna's Canon. Lacquer. 1632. © The Wellcome Library.

Yale-SOAS Islamic Manuscript Gallery

The Yale-SOAS Islamic Manuscript Gallery is a transatlantic partnership working to digitise and preserve thousands of rare and valuable manuscripts and make them easily accessible worldwide.

The project will scan approximately 20,000 pages in Arabic, Persian and Western scripts held separately in the collections at Yale University and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), and make them widely available in open access repositories. The material, such as the beautiful Ganj al-ganj (a manuscript from the 18th century said to contain previously unknown quatrains from Omar Khayamm), has been selected for its high intellectual value as well as

its rarity, and demonstrates the great cultural contributions that have been made over the centuries by Middle Eastern scholars, poets, philosophers, scientists and physicians.

The manuscripts will also be accompanied by the manuscript catalogues, language dictionaries and research apparatus that scholars will need to work on this often complex and demanding material.

Many of the materials in the collection are extremely fragile and scanning will be carried out in carefully controlled conditions. Innovative optical character recognition software will also be used to help in the transliteration of the many languages and scripts used in the texts. These tools will also help make the manuscript gallery searchable and enable the creation of internal cross-references for connecting the materials within the archive.

- Many of the materials in the collection currently only exist in printed form
- Much of the material from SOAS' collection of Persian manuscripts has never been catalogued properly before
- Language experts will develop crosswalks or interpretive tables that link modern spellings to the many transliteration schemas, which vary over time and are present in the selected materials

Website: www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/programmes/digitisation/jiscneh/yalesoas

Launch date: February 2011

Access: Open Access

Lead organisations: Yale University and the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS)

Summary: An international digitisation project placing thousands of rare and culturally valuable Middle Eastern manuscripts in open access repositories

As well being a valuable resource in itself, the collection and the many innovations involved in putting it together will form a scalable model for other special collections and libraries hoping to increase the accessibility of their own precious manuscript collections.

Yale University

SOAS
University of London

"A successful project will provide scholars with access to valuable historical manuscripts linked to robust reference materials. Access to these critically valuable works can facilitate a significant change in understanding Middle Eastern cultures, by advancing intellectual insight and showing respect for and collaborating with colleagues around the globe."

Peter Colvin, Librarian for Islamic Middle East Studies and Faculty Librarian at SOAS

Images from Ganj al-ganj manuscript. © School of Oriential and African Studies.

Digital Resources for Islamic Studies

This document is available in alternative formats
For more information: www.jisc.ac.uk/publications