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PRESS RELEASE

Cornell Library helps preserve precious Arabic texts and documents

As part of a program initiated primarily to support the reconstruction efforts in Iraq, Cornell University Library's Department of Preservation and Collections Maintenance has developed an online tutorial specifically to assist in the preservation of culturally and historically important Arabic documents.

The development of the Preservation Tutorial is indicative of Cornell's commitment to furthering the exchange of knowledge and sharing of understanding across borders. It provides crucial information resources for professional librarians in the Middle East on the preservation of books, manuscripts, analogue audio and video recordings and digital film. The tutorial came into effect when, at a preservation discourse in Jordan, Mr. John Dean, preservation and conservation librarian at Cornell Medical Library, learned of the needs of librarians and archivists from Iraq for an Arabic tutorial to fill a much-needed niche for them in the preservations of Arabic documents..

"The goal is to support librarians and archivists in the Arabic-speaking world. Restoring these bits of history is crucial to a nation's advancement and really fundamental to its cultural life and economic development," said Mr. Dean, who wrote the entire tutorial.

Based on the online preservation tutorial that was originally created by Cornell University for Southeast Asia, the Arabic tutorial has been carefully adapted to reflect the special requirements of the Middle East.

In addition to details on the preservation of modern documents, the tutorial includes specifics on the preservation of papyrus, parchment and clay tablets as important ancient texts on these materials are frequently found across Arabia. In addition there is further information on specific preservation techniques suitable for all climactic conditions across the region from

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the hot and humid coastal regions to the more arid interior. With illustrations of the necessary equipment and supplies needed for preservation processes (created by Carla DeMello of the Cornell Library's Instruction, Research and Information Services [IRIS]) the Arabic tutorial offers approaches that can be carried out with limited resources as well as providing model preservation programs that librarians and archivists can build on over time. Importantly, the tutorial also includes details of the suppliers of essential preservation equipment and materials, which means that preservationists are given the means to implement the recommendations of the tutorial as well as the know-how.

Arabic is the world's fourth most-spoken language, with a powerful tradition in scholarship, poetry and scientific discovery, which has been, and continues to be, documented by academics and commentators across the region. The significance of the contribution of the Arab World to world knowledge and the importance of preserving Arabic documents for the benefit of future generations of all nationalities cannot be over-estimated.

The Arabic and Southeast Asia tutorials are available at <http://www.librarypreservation.org>.

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