

**SOME THOUGHTS ON A MAGHRIBI DIGITAL LIBRARY  
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A HISTORIAN OF THE  
CONTEMPORARY MAGHRIB**

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I. EXISTING INITIATIVES AT HARVARD UNIVERSITY RELEVANT TO A  
MAGHRIBI DIGITAL LIBRARY

*1. Harvard Google Project*

Harvard University Library and Google are collaborating on a project to digitize a large number of Harvard's library books that are out of copyright and to make them available to Internet users. The project will dramatically increase Internet access to the holdings of the Harvard University Library, which includes more than 15.5 million volumes, both in and out of copyright. Out of copyright material includes books and journals published prior to 1923.

Harvard University has a premier collection of Maghribi materials that would be included in the Google Project, including a near complete collection of 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century lithographs from Fez; a comprehensive collection of books and journals in Arabic and other languages for the study of the contemporary Maghrib; and a newspaper collection.

*2. Harvard Islamic Heritage Project*

Harvard University has launched an initiative known as the Islamic Heritage Project, which will preserve and digitize historically significant Islamic materials and make the resulting images - including digitized texts of the classics of the Islamic tradition - available via the Internet. Although the list of materials to be treated under this heading has not yet been compiled, texts and other documents relevant to the pre-modern Maghrib will undoubtedly be included.

*3. Other Harvard University Digital Projects with Interest to the Maghrib*

a. The HOLLIS Portal

HOLLIS is a comprehensive and powerful "portal" web interface that presents a single, organized view of web-accessible resources to the Harvard community. It provides access to union catalogs and more than 1,500 electronic resources. HOLLIS also organizes and provides access to information about Harvard's libraries, allowing users to extend searches to individual library web pages. Through keyword searches, a wealth of material on the Maghrib is retrievable.

b. VIA

The Visual Information Access (VIA) system is a publicly available union catalog of visual resources at Harvard. It includes information about slides, photographs, objects and artifacts in the university's libraries, museums and archives. Records in VIA are

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contributed to the system from a variety of local cataloging systems at participating libraries, archives, and museums, including Harvard Islamic collections. The system contains many historic and contemporary images with a Maghribi interest.

c. OASIS

The Online Archival Search Information System (OASIS) is a publicly available union catalog of archival and manuscript-finding aids created by various archives and repositories at Harvard. Finding aids are detailed descriptions of the contents of archival and manuscript collections, usually including an inventory describing the individual items in the collection and background information that puts the collection in a context. Arabic and Islamic materials are part of the collection.

**II. SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE PROJECTS**

Research on Maghribi history, politics and society will be enhanced through digitization projects in the following areas of interest:

*1. Digitization of newspaper collections*

No US repository has a complete run of any one major 20<sup>th</sup> century Maghribi newspaper. Even the most recent period is spottily covered. A priority list of newspapers and magazines suitable for digitization should be compiled.

*2. Digitization of magazines and journals*

Universities in the Maghrib produce periodicals in the fields of social science and history that are not widely available. Yet they often contain good material of regional interest.

*3. Digitization of Dissertations*

Few Maghribi dissertations see the light of day. They are buried in the archives and never published. They are a prime target for digitization.

*4. Finding Aids to Archival Collections*

This would include hand lists from National Libraries, collections in the various Ministries, and catalogs from private and semi-public collections, such as the Centre Jacques Berque, CEMAT, La Source, the Fondation du Roi` Abd al-Aziz, etc.