



Toward the mapping of the Arab-Muslim *turâth*

From a classic catalog to a mapping of the *turâth*

The Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies, based in Cairo, was established in 1953 by the Dominican Order to promote dialogue and cultural encounters between Muslims and Christians.

An exceptional library has been built up to fulfill this mission, with more than 155,000 volumes and a large collection of journals in Arabic and western languages, which opens the outstanding heritage of Arab culture to Egyptian and foreign students and researchers.

The library catalog is undergoing a major development, integrating pioneering and innovative cataloging standards (FRBR

and RDA). This step will create a new ability to explore the Arab-Muslim heritage, allowing us not only to catalog books, but to show **the intellectual relations between them and their authors**: schools of thought, related comments and rebuttals of major works of the *turâth*, etc.

Each book will be visually positioned in its **historical context** and in the **history of its publication and editing**. Through our database, each user of the library can then clearly see this historical contextualization.

The aim of the project is clear: to offer a **real mapping of Arab-Muslim**

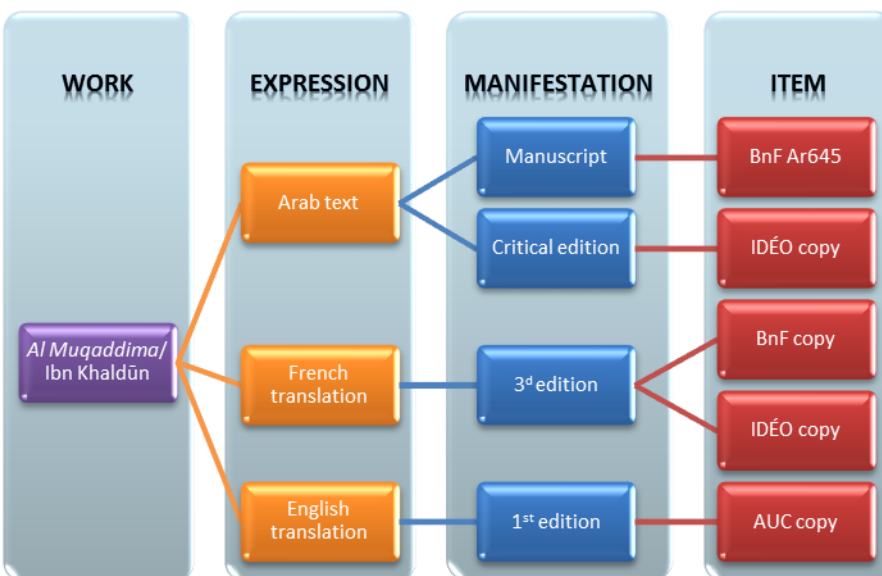
turâth, an invaluable tool for scholars and non-specialists.

Based on international standards, a second phase of development will allow the catalog to **integrate data from other research institutes** wishing to contribute to this mapping, allowing the sharing of this knowledge beyond the Arab-Muslim world to the intellectual environment of the Near and Middle East.

Ultimately, researchers worldwide will have a **general mapping of the *turâth*** through our linking up with other research institutes and libraries, sharing the resources of each.

The library catalog of the Institute

- > A catalog based on an outstanding library.
- > Use of international cataloging norms (FRBR / RDA).
- > Historical contextualization and inter-textual elements of the Arab-Muslim *turâth*.
- > Progressive integration of data from other cultural heritages.
- > Visualization accessible to researchers worldwide.



In detail in the next pages:

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- Critical reading of the *turâth*
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The Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies in Cairo

The Institute (IDEO) is an academic center based in Cairo whose main mission is the study of the classical Arab-Muslim heritage and the promotion of interreligious dialogue.

The Institute was founded in 1953 by an Egyptian scholar, **Georges Anawati**, who is still considered a leading author on medieval Arabic philosophy. His

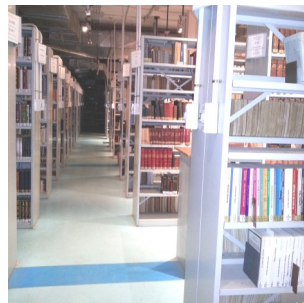
name today still generates sympathy and respect among academic institutions of Islamic studies in Egypt and abroad.

The Institute organizes **research seminars**, lectures, meetings and study tours. Over the years it has developed a friendly and loyal network among academic researchers and universities in Egypt, fore-

most **al-Azhar University** and the Manuscript Institute of the **Arab League**.

A member of the Institute, Michel Cuyppers, received the Republic of Iran's 2009 *World Prize for the Book of the Year* for his study of the rhetoric of the Qur'an.

The library of the Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies



The Institute gathers a **team of researchers** on Arab heritage. It has accumulated an **outstanding library** of over 155,000 books, including

20,000 classical texts from the first ten centuries of Islam, in all disciplines of Islamic studies: Arabic, Qur'an exegesis, theology, law and jurisprudence, philosophy, Sufism and science.

Situated in a large garden between Islamic Cairo and Madīnat al-Bu'ūth where foreign students of al-Azhar are housed, the library is **open to the public** and serves students at the Master's level and

above.

In 2011, it served nearly 2,000 readers (including 500 new ones), of whom 64% were Egyptians and 58% were university students in Cairo.

The guesthouse for researchers, adjoining the library, accommodates students and teachers from abroad for long or medium term stays. Guests are usually invited to conduct a seminar during their period in residence.

A library specialized in the classical literature of the 1st islamic millennium.

The AlKindi project, version 4

We are about to launch a **new version of AlKindi software**.

This fourth version follows three previous software suites put in place since 2002, set up in collaboration with a team of specialists of the **French National Library (BnF)**. AlKindi is already notable for having integrated complex **Arabic onomastic** and its capacity to distinguish between **cataloging languages, interface languages**, and languages of

the cataloged works while maintaining compliance with **ISBD and UNIMARC**.

Version 4 implements new FRBR standards (as specified by RDA)—**the first catalog in the world to have achieved this**. These standards take into account the history of cultural works and their physical editions. Today, cataloging a book is not a mere exercise of compiling factual evidence of an actual book, but it requires **the book's placement in its**

cultural history and context. AlKindi version 4 is designed to meet these new requirements and give access to **a real mapping of the texts of the classical Arabic heritage** (the *turâth*). AlKindi version 4 records an account of the specific nuances of Arab culture and integrates it into a portal available worldwide.

The tool will be available in three languages: Arabic, French and English.



FRBR and RDA norms:

- www.ifla.org
- www.rdatoolkit.org

The 200 author Project

Following its call for proposals, a contract entitled “Historic contextualization of 200 authors of the Classical Islamic heritage” was signed on 19 December 2012 with the European Union under the *European Instrument for Human Rights & Democracy* (reference EIDHR/2012 / 308 681) for an amount of € 155,000.

This contract offers a qualitative leap for AlKindi version 4 since it opens an **opportunity to enrich our**

catalog with greater historical contextualization and intertextuality, which will highlight all the resources of the new software.

200 authors of the classical Arabic cultural heritage will be given priority, including al-Ġāhiz̧ (d. 255/869), al-Farābī (d. 339/950), Ibn Sīnā (Avicenne, d. 428/1037), al-Bīrūnī (d. 440/1048), al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), Ibn Rushd (Averroes, d. 595/1198), Ibn ‘Arabī (d. 638/1240), Ibn Taymiyya

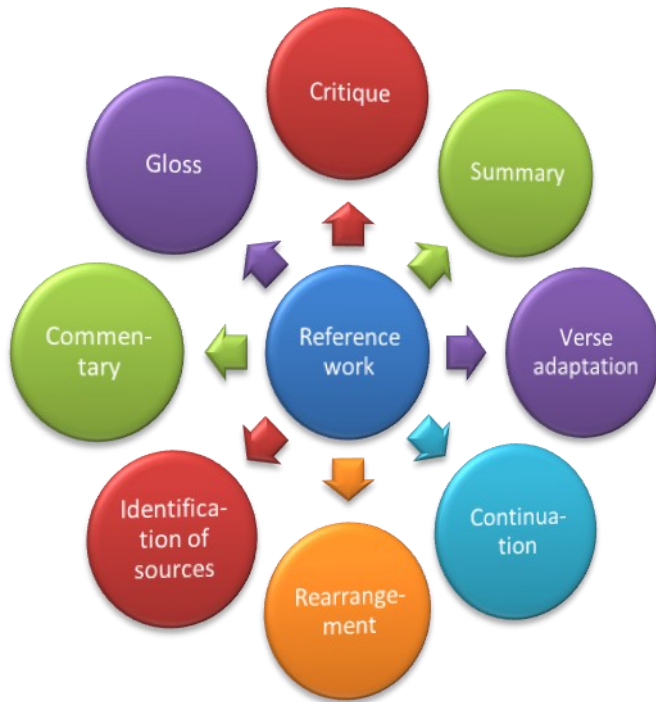
(d. 728/1328), Ibn Qayyim al-Ġawziyya (d. 751/1350), Ibn Khaldūn (d. 808/1406), Ibn Ḥaġar al-‘Asqalānī (d. 852/1449), and al-Suyūṭī (d. 911/1505).

The catalog will integrate the historical context of the relationships between authors and their works.

This new contextual light will help avoid misinterpretation, identify the innovative accents of each work or author, and underline the central ideas of the schools of thought.



A few types of possible relationships between works



Enable a critical and respectful reading of the *turāth*

In Arabic, the term “critical thinking” (*tafkīr naqdī*) is often understood as distrustful of the Arab or Islamic culture and is unbearable for many Arab researchers. They find it difficult therefore to adopt a historical perspective as researchers in the West do. They prefer to consider classical culture in its internal consistency and organic

development, **an ahistorical approach** that brings out the specific beauty of Arab culture but tends to minimize the breaks and therefore **becomes inadequate** to help to meet new cultural challenges. The AlKindi catalog makes possible **a more helpful historical reading** of the *turāth*.

In addition, the sense of a particular work in the

turāth is difficult to capture because many of its authors are compilers of the works of the ancients. Their genius has often been to summarize, rearrange, or to compile the works of their predecessors rather than to create an original or innovative work: **the contextualization of their works** is therefore essential to understanding them.

Our catalog’s integration of the historical context and intertextuality of works and authors allows a more nuanced and innovative approach to the Arab-Muslim cultural heritage, both critical and respectful.



Legal statutes

The **Dominican Institute for Oriental Studies (IDEO)** is an institute attached to the **Dominican Priory of Cairo**.

Under Egyptian law, the priory is an **inalienable property** of the Coptic Catholic Patriarchate, recognized by a presidential decree of 26 October 1999 (No. 369 of the *Official Journal* of the Arab Republic of Egypt).

Under French law, the **priory** exists through the **association "Dominicains du Caire"** (Law 1901), declared on 13 October 2008 (*Journal officiel* of 8 November 2008) and is headquartered in Paris (8th).

The **Dominican Institute** for Oriental Studies is financially supported by the **association "Les Amis de l'IDEO"** (Law 1901), declared on December 1st, 1992 (No. 75.000.1994), recognized as being of public utility (*Journal officiel* of 4 July 1998, NOR: INTA9800163D), and is headquartered in Paris (13th).



Masna al-Tarabeesh street, I
P.O.Box 18 – Abbassiah
11381 Cairo (Egypt)

Tel.: + 20 2 24 82 55 09

Fax: + 20 2 24 67 67 70

Email: info@ideo-cairo.org

EuropAid ID:

EG-2012-GBL-0305745224

Find us on the Web:

- www.ideo-cairo.org
- alkindi.ideo-cairo.org

The stakes of the project

The AlKindi software suite, developed at IDEO in recent years, is **the only cataloging tool that takes into consideration the specificity of Arab culture** (writing from right to left, onomastic, hegirian calendars). Developments under way will respectfully translate into Arab culture the new international cataloging standards. In this way, the Arab-Muslim cultural heritage will become **available to all researchers** along with its own genius and level of excellence.

More: the use of international standards will

facilitate **the reconciliation of the Arab-Muslim heritage of the first millennium with other cultural heritages of humanity**, since the same tools, intelligently implemented, will allow exploring them together.

The greatest potential of the project conducted by IDEO is that the mapping the Arab-Muslim *turâth*, made available to the researcher, will not be limited to its own borders. **The partial and "regional" mapping of the Arab-Muslim heritage** of the first millennium of Islam will be expandable and

linked to other "regional" maps and other cultural heritages. Thus, **we can gradually contribute to a universal mapping of human cultures, in accordance with the genius of each, according to a historical and contextual understanding.**

To this end, **IDEO will distribute its cataloging tool** to all research institutes and specialized libraries wishing to participate in this general mapping **by pooling their contextualized data** according to the standards of FRBR and RDA.

Towards a universal mapping of human cultures according to a historical and contextual understanding.

Two tools need to be developed

Two tools remain to be developed by IDEO to complete its work.

► **An innovative data visualization catalog**, with enriched elements of intertextuality and historical contextualization. A team is already working to invent a new OPAC allowing a visualization of data, more complex than an ordinary library catalog.

The challenge is to bring out a drawing of the works and the links between them and their authors in a historical context, while maintaining the normal functions of a library catalog.

► **The definition of precise standards for the transmission of complex data** (such as FRBR / RDA) as an XML feed. This standard, which will be integrated into the

cataloging system, will enable an easy sharing of cataloging and contextualization elements, uploaded by diverse research institutes, libraries or even individual researchers, in a single shared database.

The challenge is to allow all to work in parallel toward a collaborative eventual universal mapping of the human cultures.

