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University Libraries

# Report

FALL 2012 ISSUE

## RU Libraries partner with Syriac Institute to preserve and promote collections on Middle-East minorities

**B**eth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute was founded in 1992 to preserve and collect publications that illuminate the proud history of Syriac culture as well as the history and culture of other Middle East minorities.

Over the next two decades, the Institute's founder, George Kiraz, with the financial support of friends and colleagues, has built a vast private collection of books and manuscripts, which forms the heart of the Beth Mardutho Research Library (BMRL). The BMRL has also acquired two other significant collections of private scholarly libraries, including a significant collection of rare materials from Abrohom Nuro and an extensive library devoted to Armenian studies from Edward G. Mathews. The collection of materials at BMRL, comprised of over 30,000 items dedicated to the study of Syriac and the broader Middle Eastern context, is rivaled only by the libraries of the world's finest research institutions.

The Beth Mardutho Research Library primarily holds texts in Syriac, Arabic, English, French, German, Greek, and Latin. The library also contains publications in less-common languages such as Aramaic, Armenian, Coptic, Malayalam, and Turkish.

The rare items in the Beth Mardutho Research Library include:

- *Kiab al-dur al-farid fi tafsir al-'ahd al-jadid* by Bar Salibi (an Arabic

commentary on the Gospels).

- A collection of ethnic newspapers published by immigrants in New Jersey in the early 20th century, in different languages that all used the Syriac script.
- *Taarikh suriyyah*, by Yusuf al-Dibs (an eight-volume history of Syria from ancient times to the Ottoman Period, in Arabic).
- Books on *Peshitta*, one of the earliest translations of the Old Testament into a language other than Hebrew (the translation, into Syriac, was prepared by Syriac Jews).
- Cassette recordings of the liturgies of the Oriental Orthodox Christians of the Middle East and South Asia in their native languages.
- Over 15,000 letters and telegrams from a rare library in the Middle East, from the mid-1850s to the 1930s.

In addition to the resources of the research library, Beth Mardutho:

The Syriac Institute also publishes an online, peer-reviewed journal dedicated to the scholarly study of Syriac called *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies*, featuring articles pertaining to Syriac literature, religion, history, and culture along with critical book reviews that pertain to Syriac studies. Moreover, Beth Mardutho sponsors the publication of other scholarly resources devoted to Syriac, such as the recently released *Gorgias Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Syriac Heritage*. This work, over a decade in the

making, includes over 600 entries written by more than 70 scholars from around the world.

What Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute has lacked is both a connection to a respected institution of higher education and the means of conducting large-scale digital



A manuscript of the Shhimo or the traditional daily prayers according to the Syriac tradition. The manuscript was prepared by the scribe Giragos Kiraz of Ivos, George Kiraz's great uncle, and was written in 1900.

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**RU Libraries partner with Syriac Institute**

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preservation of its rare materials. Both shortcomings have been removed through a partnership the institute formed this spring with the Rutgers University Libraries.

Through the agreement signed between the two parties, the Libraries will digitally archive, preserve, and make publicly accessible all works in the Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute in the public domain (that have no copyright restrictions). The works will become part of RUcore, an open access institutional repository that makes the contributed works of Rutgers University faculty and Rutgers University departments, centers, and institutes permanently and freely accessible for scholars and researchers around the globe.

The Rutgers University Libraries' partnership with Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute will significantly enhance the resources available at Rutgers for scholarly study of ancient history, the Middle East, languages, and religion. Middle Eastern Studies faculty members at Rutgers have already praised Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute, noting that: "The research library includes a number of rare works, such as manuscripts, rare editions, and books printed by now defunct Middle East publishing houses. Many of the books can not be found in any other library, including the libraries of Princeton and Harvard ... The Beth Mardutho Research Library will directly address the academic interests and needs of Rutgers faculty and students across four departments and three programs, as well as students in a wide array of cultural and religious organizations. And with access to these materials, the university will be in a much stronger position to seek external funding for these areas in the future."

For more information about Beth Mardutho: The Syriac Institute, please see: [www.bethmardutho.org](http://www.bethmardutho.org)

For more information about RUcore, please see: [rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/](http://rucore.libraries.rutgers.edu/).

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**Dana Library welcomes new digital humanities librarian**

The John Cotton Dana Library, on the Rutgers-Newark campus, is pleased to welcome Krista White who assumed the new position of digital humanities librarian. Krista began her work in the Dana Library in April.

As digital humanities librarian, Krista will offer support in integrating digital resources, methodologies, technologies, and analytical tools with traditional resources and approaches to teaching and learning activities in the humanities. She will also serve as an adviser to teaching faculty, particularly in support of oral history projects, and assist the Rutgers University Libraries' Institute of Jazz Studies in planning digital projects based on its extensive collections of sound, image, and archival material.

For the past five years, Krista worked in a variety of technical support capacities at Drew University including Instructional Technology Services Training Coordinator, GIS Support Specialist, and Visual Resources Curator



in the Department of Art History. In those functions, Krista helped students, faculty and staff navigate emerging technologies for teaching and learning, and spearheaded multiple digitization projects, including the creation of Drew's online information technology training program, Drew Online Network User Training (DONUT). She was also the project manager for the creation of a digital finding aid for two years of recordings of the Dodge Poetry Festival, housed in Drew University's Rose Memorial Library.

Krista earned her MLIS from Rutgers' School of Communication and Information in 2008, where her studies concentrated on digital libraries and metadata standards. She also holds masters degrees in the Anthropology of Religion from Drew University and in Art History from the University of Colorado in Boulder.

Krista can be reached at 973.353.5913 or [kwhite2@rumail.rutgers.edu](mailto:kwhite2@rumail.rutgers.edu).

**Libraries welcome new art librarian**

The Rutgers University Libraries are pleased to welcome Megan Lotts, the new art librarian on the New Brunswick campuses.

As the art librarian Megan Lotts will serve as a liaison and provide reference and instruction services to the departments of art history, visual arts, and landscape architecture. Megan will also develop collections in print and digital formats, and create and maintain web-based research guides, learning tools, and other digital resources.

For the past four years Megan worked as an Assistant Professor and Fine Arts Librarian at Morris Library on the Southern Illinois University Carbondale campus. Her responsibilities included liaison work with the departments of architecture, art & design, cinema & photography, music, speech communications, and theater. Megan's responsibilities also included teaching eight-week information literacy courses as well as working closely with SIUC's freshman transitional courses,



including teaching a semester-long library intensive course for undecided freshmen.

Megan was known for her curatorial work in the Morris Library's Rotunda Art Space as well as other larger scale cross disciplinary projects such as Woodblock Woodstock and the Antarctica: Imagined Geographies project. She was also known on the SIUC campus for her own arts projects. To view some of Megan's arts projects, see: [www.meganlotts.com](http://www.meganlotts.com)

Megan earned her MLIS from University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2008, where she focused on arts librarianship. She also holds an MFA from UW-Madison in 2004 with a focus in painting and installation art. Currently Megan researches both as a librarian and as an artist

Megan can be reached at 732.932.7189 or [megan.lotts@rutgers.edu](mailto:megan.lotts@rutgers.edu). Her office is located in the Art Library, in the Voorhees Mall area of the College Avenue campus.