

**Launch of Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts and Fragments in
the Library of Deir al-Surian
British Library, London
30 September 2014**

On Tuesday 30th 2014 September in the boardroom of the British Library in London, the Levantine Foundation proudly launched the Catalogue of the Syriac Manuscripts and Fragments in the Library of Deir al-Surian, Wadi al-Natrun (Egypt) . The culmination of Professor Lucas van Rompay and Dr. Sebastian Brock over 8 years work, the catalogue gives a comprehensive description of forty eight bound manuscripts and over two hundred fragments on parchment, paper and papyrus preserved in the monastery. It opens with an introduction emphasising the huge importance of this collection, outlining the history of the monastery, and finishes with an album of well selected images.

Attended by a select group of distinguished guests including Sir Derek Plumbly, former HM Ambassador to Egypt, President of the foundation; Bishop Angaelos, Head of the Coptic Church in the UK; Fr. Bigoul el Souriany, librarian of Deir al-Surian, Dr Kristian Jensen, Head of Collections & Curation, British Library, patrons and supporters of our work in Egypt, and the authors of the catalogue.

The evening began with wine and canapés reception at 6.30. Once the guests had arrived and settled in, Dr. Kristian Jensen opened proceedings by saying a few words on the historical connection between Deir al-Surian and the British Library and the importance of maintaining close links between the two establishments. His speech was followed by Sir Derek Plumbly, Father Bigoul el Souriany, HG Bishop Angaelos, Professor Lucas van Rompay, Dr. Sebastian Brock and Elizabeth Sobczynski, Chief Executive of the Levantine Foundation who outlined the significance of the occasion, thanked the authors for their outstanding work and presented copies of the catalogue to Dr. Kristian Jensen for the British Library and Dr. Ilana Tahan for her support and help in organising the event.

Sadly the Viscount Norwich, Patron of the foundation who was going to give a welcoming speech had to cancel his attendance due to unforeseen circumstances.

Although the printing of the catalogue represents a hugely important milestone in the Levantine Foundation's quest to conserve and preserve

the ancient manuscripts of Deir el Surian, a lot of work remains to be done. The next stage of the Levantine Foundation's work will focus on the digitisation and cataloguing of the Arabic, Coptic and Ethiopic manuscripts. The latter has begun last December under the direction of Professor Stephen Davis and a team of the distinguished scholars from Yale University. By digitising the manuscripts we will be able to put them into the public domain and to reunite them electronically with manuscripts dispersed around the world. The digitisation will also ensure that the documents will be preserved forever in digital form ensuring their continuing survival.

The Levantine Foundation would like to thank:

The British Library for hosting the event

Dr. Ilana Tahan, Lead Curator Hebrew and Christian Orient Studies,
British Library for her involvement and help in organising the launch

Ms. Elizabeth Lubienska for her tireless help and advice

Mr. Christopher Sobczynski for his advice and support