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**From Tangier's Old Medina to the World:
Efforts to Make the Visual Resources in the Collection of
the Tangier American Legation Institute for Moroccan
Studies More Widely Available**

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Abstract

The library of the Tangier American Legation Institute for Moroccan Studies (TALIM) is a small, highly specialized research library in the old medina of Tangier. Though the library contains specialized, often unique materials on Morocco, the Maghrib, and US-Morocco relations, it has not been well known among academics and researchers, and consequently is underutilized. This article surveys efforts by the TALIM Director and Board to rectify that by making the library catalog available online, and to make unique visual, textual, and audio materials available through Archnet. As a small nonprofit, TALIM faced unique challenges that it met by building collaborative networks. The article briefly outlines prior efforts of TALIM to facilitate access for scholars and academics worldwide. It then focuses on an inter-institutional effort involving the Aga Khan Documentation Center at MIT, Wellesley College, and other institutions in Morocco and the United States to simultaneously conserve a collection of glass negatives, and to make the images more widely available to scholars and researchers. Finally, the article will assess these efforts, and chart future directions.

About the Legation and its Collection

The Tangier American Legation for Moroccan Studies (TALIM) is an institution that comprises a museum, cultural center, and research library. It is housed in a complex inside the walls of the old medina of Tangier. The entrances on zanqat America are about 100 m or so from rue Portugal, though that entrance to the medina was not extant when the property was given to the United States in 1821. Until a

new consulate was built outside of the walls of the old city in 1961 the facility was an active diplomatic site. It then housed a training center for the State Department and the Peace Corps for about 15 years when plans to sell the property prompted the formation of the Tangier American Legation Museum Society (TALMS) with the goal of establishing a museum.

An exhibition and ceremony were held there in 1976 to mark the bicentennial of American independence. TALM opened its doors in 1978, leasing the facility from the U.S. government for a nominal annual fee. In 1980 the Legation became the first (and to date only) National Historic Monument of the United States located on foreign soil. Though the collection includes some items from when the Legation was an active diplomatic facility, most of the collection is composed of donations.

In an article published in the December 1989 *Bulletin of the Middle East Studies Association*, TALMS Librarian Priscilla Roberts described the collection in some detail, and it is worth quoting at length:

The Museum collections range from fine eighteenth- and nineteenth-century European engravings on Morocco, prints and antique maps from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, to a very comprehensive collection of art on Gibraltar, to furnishings and rugs. Two major art collections are gifts from long-time Tangier residents Donald Angus and Mrs. Marguerite McBey, widow of the artist James McBey...

The growing Library currently has over 2500 volumes of books, monographs, theses, documents and serials, dating from the seventeenth century to the present. Special emphasis is on the study of Morocco, although TALM has holdings on all of North Africa. It owns an extensive collection of English-language newspapers published in Tangier, dating from 1883, and microfilm copies of a unique newspaper published in London and devoted to Morocco (1918–1924). Microfilms from the U.S. National Archives of State Department Records between Morocco and the United States, dispatches from U.S. Consuls in Tangier from 1797 to 1906 are also included in the collection.

Cataloguing has begun recently on several manuscript collections, old photographs, 2000 glass-plate negatives, and maps donated to TALM. The map holdings range from sixteenth- and seventeenth-century antique ones of Barbary, to cadastral, topographical, and road maps of the Spanish and French Protectorates, to military maps of cities used during World War II. (p. 190).

The collection has grown considerably since 1989, with substantial donations from the collections of the anthropologist David M. Hart; Joseph Verner Reed, whose long diplomatic career included a stint as U.S. Ambassador to Morocco from 1981 to 1985; and the entrepreneur and publisher Malcolm S. Forbes, as well as numerous other donors. The most current catalog of the library has been made available on LibraryThing at:

https://www.librarything.com/catalog/TALIM_Morocco

Between 1992 and 1995, while serving as a Peace Corps volunteer at the Legation, I secured donations of hundreds of volumes, as well as funding to ship them to Morocco, in order to establish a general interest resource center for students and teachers of English in Tangier and northern Morocco. Much of that collection has since been passed on to other institutions. The need for such a general interest library in English has been considerably diminished by the increasing activities of the American Language Center in Tangier; increased availability of English resources on the internet; and, perhaps most importantly, the shift of the Legation's educational programs toward Arabic literacy and skills training for local women and children. In 2009, TALM and TALMS were both renamed the Tangier American Legation Institute for Moroccan Studies (TALIM).

The Project

The remainder of this article focuses on an inter-institutional effort to preserve and make more widely available TALIM's collection of approximately 2,000 medium format (4 x 5 in) glass negatives. The majority of the images in the collection document Tangier between the First and Second World Wars, though there are also photographs taken in various locations throughout Morocco, Algeria, southern Spain, and France. They are believed to be the work of Paul Servant, a longtime resident of Tangier. Though some of his photographs did

appear in print, most notably in the publications of the local tourism office at which he worked, he is not believed to have been a professional photographer. The negatives were donated to TALIM by art collector, philanthropist, and sometimes resident of Tangier Donald Angus (1908–2001). He had acquired them sometime in the 1970s in a local market.

The images in the collection provide important and rare visual documentation of life in the western Mediterranean at a period when nearly every aspect of society was in flux. In addition to portraits and photographs documenting the daily life of the city's inhabitants, images capture the construction of the port, railway, and some of the city's best-known buildings.

In 2013, at the annual meeting of the Middle East Studies Association, Gerald Loftus, TALIM's Resident Director, Rachid Aadnani from the Program in Middle Eastern Studies at Wellesley College, Sharon C. Smith, Program Head of the Aga Khan Documentation Center at MIT (AKDC@MIT) and Michael Toler, Archnet Content Manager, AKDC@MIT, discussed ways to make the collection more widely available. This needed to be accomplished in a manner that also facilitated preservation of the original negatives.¹ Glass plate negatives are fragile and prone to deterioration. They must be handled with great care, and as infrequently as possible. Best practice protocols mandate the creation of surrogate images, and cold storage of the originals. A plan was developed to digitize and catalog the negatives, and make them available for consultation on Archnet. Currently all the negatives are publicly available, cataloged according to the information provided, though we continue working to expand and, in some cases, correct or revise the available information.

It should be noted that this endeavor builds on the progress of previous endeavors. While no documentation of the dates, subjects, or locations of the photographs came with the negatives, in the mid-1970s a group of self-described Tangier "old-timers" compiled a set

¹ Also discussed were approximately 60 hours recordings of Moroccan music made by Paul Bowles in Morocco between 1959 and 1962 digitized by TALIM in 2010. The recordings are also being made available on Archnet. Selections have been released on LP, CDs, and digitally, but once complete, the Archnet collection at <https://archnet.org/collections/872> will make the full collection widely available for the first time.

of hand-written notes attempting to identify the images taken in and around Tangier. While helpful, they describe only a small portion of the negatives, and can be quite difficult to decipher at times. For decades the negatives were stored in wooden boxes at the Legation, during which time many were badly damaged by environmental factors. In the summers of 1989, 1990, 2004, and 2005, Beatrice St. Laurent, Professor of Islamic Art at Bridgewater State University, cleaned, properly repackaged, and made preliminary identifications of the negatives. She also began the process of digitizing the images. Her efforts were supported by grants from Bridgewater State University, the American Institute for Maghrib Studies, and Wellesley College. Susan G. Miller, Professor of History at the University of California, Davis, also provided preliminary identifications for the entire collection.

In the summer of 2014, AKDC@MIT launched an ongoing collaboration with Wellesley College's Office of Career Education and Program for Middle Eastern Studies to continue the digitization of the negatives. Over the course of three summers between 2014 and 2016, Talin Ghazarian, Aathira Chennat, Tessa Kellner, Jülide Iye, and Amina Ziad completed the digitization of the negatives, and began cataloging them for Archnet. The first images from the collection were made available on Archnet in November 2014. Images were reviewed by the Archnet Content Manager, and made available in installments. By the end of summer 2016, all images were available on Archnet at <https://archnet.org/collections/802>.

Negatives scanned between 1998 and 2005 are represented by images that have been restored and tinted. Negatives scanned since 2014 were cleaned again before scanning,² but are presented on Archnet to represent the actual condition of the negative. No cropping or other alterations have taken place.

Currently the organization of the virtual collection on Archnet reflects the organization of the actual slide collection as it is stored. Images are presented in sub-collections corresponding to the numbered boxes containing the slides. Slides are then numbered consecutively inside each box, corresponding to the numbers on each slide. Some boxes are devoted exclusively or predominantly to a

² Thanks to Ann Marie Willer, Preservation Librarian and the Institute Archives and Special Collections, for advice and assistance in procuring the materials for the project.

theme or location. Where this is the case, it has been indicated in the list describing the collection. The contents of other boxes are much more varied. In those cases, it is also indicated.

We are in the process of conducting a detailed review of the metadata on all images, synthesizing all available information and conducting further research. The organization of the collection is likely to change once that is complete. Classifying the collection by theme, date, location, or subject is likely to facilitate its use more than the organization by box number. User feedback is very helpful in this process.³ We welcome your comments, corrections, and clarifications on the metadata provided, as well as suggestions for how the collection might be best organized to facilitate its use.

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³ I am particularly grateful to Manuel Laborda for his systematic review of the image cataloging.

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