
“Stuff Happens”: A Brief Overview of the 2003 Destruction of Iraqi Manuscript Collections, Archives, and Libraries

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ABSTRACT

On March 20, 2003, military forces of the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia invaded Iraq. In the course of this invasion and subsequent occupation, Iraq's cultural infrastructure suffered a great deal of destruction. While international attention has focused primarily on the immense destruction done to the country's pre-Islamic archaeological assets, domestic Iraqi attention has focused equally on the losses suffered by the country's manuscript collections, archives, and document collections. This article provides a general overview of the latter category, including a brief discussion of the events involved, damages sustained, and current status of the collections in question. While in certain key cases the damage sustained by collections was not as severe as initially reported, there were significant losses and a great deal of work lies ahead to reconstitute the facilities involved.

INTRODUCTION

On March 20, 2003, military forces of the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia invaded Iraq.¹ In the course of this invasion and subsequent occupation, Iraq's cultural infrastructure suffered a great deal of destruction. While international attention has focused primarily on the immense destruction done to the country's pre-Islamic archaeological assets, domestic Iraqi attention has focused equally on the losses suffered by their manuscript collections and archives. This article provides a general overview of the latter category, including a brief discussion of the events involved, damages sustained, and current status of the collections in question.

Most of the events relevant to these collections began at least two days after the entry of U.S. troops into Baghdad on April 8, 2003, and continued for several days—until international media attention appears to have forced a policy change. Although several causes are frequently cited—and excuses offered—for the cultural destruction suffered during that period, primary liability appears to lie with occupation forces. Legally, the collections in question were covered under the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. Even though the United States and United Kingdom are not signatories to this convention, the protocols of this agreement are fully ensconced within customary international law.² Ignorance of specific legal and material obligations was also not an excuse for nonintervention: Pentagon officials had been briefed by several experts about the requirements of the protocol, the potential for looting of cultural treasures, and specific facilities requiring protection.³

Logistically, although the U.S. government had only recently become the occupying power, the situation on the ground remained in a certain degree of flux, and sufficient forces had not been committed to control the entire city. U.S. forces were capable of providing security to any site designated as deserving protection by senior U.S. officials, such as the Ministry of Oil, the Palestine Hotel, the Sheraton Hotel, the Saddam Hussein [now Baghdad] International Airport, the Republican Palace, and several other strategic locations. Some of the more important facilities covered in this article were concentrated in two small areas that had a sufficient U.S. troop presence (about two to three tank crews) in the area to prevent the events described below. However, when Iraqi staff members asked U.S. soldiers to protect the facilities in question, the invariable response was either that “we are soldiers not policemen” or “our orders do not extend to protecting this facility.” The former director of the Dar al-Makhtutat manuscript collection, Osama Naqshbandi, stated that after a tank crew had declined to protect the National Museum and Dar al-Makhtutat facilities when looting broke out on April 10, he and the National Museum director, Jabir Khalil Ibrahim, immediately appealed to a U.S. colonel at the Palestine Hotel for protection. Despite reassurances to the contrary, no protection was extended until April 14, after the looting had become an international scandal (Al-Tikriti, 2003).

Apologists for U.S. occupation policy have striven whenever possible to assign blame for the cultural destruction to Iraqi actors.⁴ One British television presenter, Dan Cruickshank, accused certain Iraqi staff members of being Ba‘athist operatives who looted their own facilities.⁵ Apart from credible claims concerning insider vandalism at the National Library and Archives, none of the collections discussed here appear to have been intentionally damaged by staff. Indeed, most staff members continued to work in trying circumstances, initially without pay or assurance of future job security.⁶

Certain apologists have also argued that occupation authorities were relieved of their legal obligation to protect certain facilities because they were being used for military purposes. Specifically, Cruikshank cited U.S. soldiers who stated that the National Museum had been used as a defensive military position during the April 8 fall of Baghdad (Cruikshank, 2003). However, while Iraqi soldiers may have attempted to defend parts of the city from invading forces on April 8, none of those soldiers were present when staff requested U.S. force protection from looting on April 10. Legally and militarily, the Iraqi resistance faced on April 8 in no way justified the absence of U.S. protection in the following days.⁷

The impression emerges from such anecdotal evidence that those in command of U.S. forces may have knowingly neglected their legal duty under international humanitarian law to “restore and maintain law and order,” which includes preventing the looting and burning of public facilities.⁸ If this is the case, it can be argued that the U.S. government as a whole is legally liable for the events described below and may someday be obliged to compensate these facilities for their losses.⁹

The discussion that follows is based on the situation report following my visit to Baghdad on May 25–31, 2003, subsequently updated and corrected as further information has become available. During this trip I visited several affected sites and interviewed a number of officials responsible for various manuscript collections, libraries, and academic research facilities. What follows is a general overview of the damages sustained and the current status of several important manuscript collections, archives, libraries, and other document collections. The focus here is on collections with unique holdings in the Baghdad area. General academically affiliated research collections, which also suffered a great deal of loss, should in time and with sufficient support be able to duplicate and expand their pre-invasion holdings. Although there have been several reports on the state of some or all of these collections, much of the information concerning the collections remains incomplete and open to future correction and clarification.¹⁰

NATIONAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES (DAR AL-KUTUB WA AL-WATHA’IQ)

This facility, located directly across from the Ministry of Defense, was initially reported to have been completely burned and looted.¹¹ Subsequent accounts have been contradictory and complex, and solid figures concerning the initial holdings and the ultimate damage sustained by the library and archives remain lacking. As Iraq’s primary research facility and legal depository library, the National Library contained a particularly strong collection of Arabic periodicals, a collection of government documents dating back to Ottoman rule, and over a million books.

The burning and looting of the National Library appears to have taken place on two occasions: April 10 and April 12–13. The fires were set profes-

sionally with accelerants. According to Saad Eskander, the director-general of the National Library and Archives since December 2003, three days prior to the invasion staff members were instructed to destroy all archival material related to Ba‘athist rule. In the event, Eskander stated that the burning and looting was carried out by a mix of poor people who were looking for a quick profit and regime loyalists intent on destroying evidence of atrocities.¹² Although the fire damage seemed complete from outside the building, only the main reading room and lobby suffered major damage, mainly because an iron door leading to the stacks had been locked.

Immediately following the initial round of destruction, staff and volunteers associated with a cleric named ‘Abd al-Mun‘im welded the door shut and began to remove as many books as they could transport to the cleric’s al-Haqq Mosque in Sadr (formerly Saddam) City. Roughly 40 percent of the book holdings was initially said to have been removed, but Saad Eskander later stated that the amount was closer to 5 percent. He also observed that many of the books suffered from both the move and the storage conditions at the mosque. Altogether, an estimated 25 percent of the library’s book holdings were destroyed. The newspaper and periodical collection, said to be one of the largest in the Arab world, appears to have emerged largely without damage.

Prior to the invasion, a collection consisting primarily of documents dating from Hashemite (pre-1958) and Ottoman (pre-World War I) periods was removed from the National Library and placed in the basement of the General Board of Tourism. This collection, perhaps the most valuable set of holdings in the facility, escaped the initial round of burning and looting in April. However, in August 2003 the basement was flooded in unknown circumstances. In October 2003 the collection was discovered and transferred to the warehouse of an Iraqi businessman associated with the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). Following a visit by a U.S. Library of Congress delegation, the documents were transferred in December 2003 to cool storage in the former Iraqi Officer’s Club complex. Since these documents have been stored in cool rather than frozen storage, with inconsistent electricity at the cooling facility, they have continued to deteriorate, albeit at a slower rate than when first discovered in the flooded basement. Saad Eskander has estimated that 60 percent of these Ottoman and Hashemite documents have been irretrievably lost. This collection should probably have the highest priority for textual preservation.

MINISTRY OF ENDOWMENTS AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS CENTRAL LIBRARY (MAKTABAT AL-AWQAF AL-MARKAZIYYA)

Established in 1920, the Awqaf Library is the oldest public manuscript collection in Iraq.¹³ A modern two-story facility located near the Ministry of Health, the library held *waqfiyya* (religious endowment documents) and approximately 7,000 manuscripts, mostly concentrated in religious fields.

The library also held more than 45,000 printed books, including some 6,000 rare Ottoman Turkish publications. It was completely destroyed by fire on April 14 (or possibly on April 13). The staff stated that they had taken steps to protect the manuscript collection prior to this, placing roughly 5,250 of their total 7,000 manuscripts under armed protection in an undisclosed location—a location that still remains unknown to scholars and the general public.

The remaining 1,744 manuscripts were packed in thirty-two metal trunks and were in the process of being moved when the library was attacked. When interviewed, some of the staff initially suggested that U.S. troops had filmed the burning of the building, but when pressed they referred me to the ministry driver 'Abd al-Karim Sa'id, who was the primary eyewitness to the events amongst the staff members present at my interview. According to Mr. Sa'id, roughly fifteen Arabic-speaking males in civilian clothes drove up to the library in various vehicles, including a white Lada and a white VW Passat with "TV" taped onto their windows and bodies. While two of the men remained at the entrance filming the event, the rest proceeded to remove twenty-two trunks containing manuscripts. The men then used some sort of yellow substance to burn the entire library, including the remaining ten trunks, in under fifteen minutes. Staff members showed me burned out trunks and ventilation shafts containing residue of that yellow substance, which may have been a phosphate accelerant. They also showed me a small plastic container that they had found in the rubble and that they think contained the substance.

Although the staff was convinced—as were most Iraqis—that Kuwaitis were behind the destruction of this library, they admitted that they had no evidence to prove the assertion. As one staff member put it, "Iraqis might have stolen the manuscripts for personal profit, but they would never have burned them." They were certain, however, that Kuwaitis were in the city at the time, based on overhearing the dialect being used in conversation. That Kuwaitis acted as guides and/or translators for the invading U.S. forces was an assertion made by many eyewitnesses, and it appears to be accurate.

A 1987 published catalog provides detailed information on the Awqaf collection up to that date. Since 1987, about 1,200 manuscripts had been added to the collection, most of them uncataloged. As the staff had acted to protect the core collection first, most of the 1,744 manuscripts contained in the thirty-two trunks were from three collections that had been recently added to the Awqaf collection for safekeeping:

- Kamal al-Din al-Ta'i collection: 250 manuscripts
- Salih Salim Suhrawardi collection: 350 manuscripts
- Hasan al-Sadr collection: 589 manuscripts (on loan during the Musa al-Kadhim mosque renovation)

The remaining 555 manuscripts must have come from the Awqaf library's core collection. The staff did not know which trunks were burned and which were removed, but they were hopeful that the contents of the twenty-two trunks that were removed will resurface in the future. At about 60–70 manuscripts per trunk, they estimate that about 600–700 manuscripts were permanently lost in the flames, and they showed me some carbonized folios as proof of the damage.

The library's collection of published books, including the 6,000 Ottoman Turkish books, three large collections of medical books containing close to 4,000 volumes, and 5,300 books concerning Ja'fari (Shi'i) jurisprudence, appears to have been completely destroyed. According to Zayn al-Naqshbandi, a local scholar and book dealer, as of June 2004 this library had not received any form of international reconstruction assistance whatsoever.¹⁴

IRAQI HOUSE OF MANUSCRIPTS (DAR AL-MAKHTUTAT AL-'IRAQIYYA)

The approximately 47,000 manuscripts held by the Iraqi House of Manuscripts is by far the largest collection of rare manuscripts in Iraq.¹⁵ This collection had previously been housed in the National Museum until the early 1980s, and organizationally the facility remained under the control of the National Museum and the Ministry of Culture through 2003. As a result, some confusion has arisen between National Museum holdings and Dar al-Makhtutat holdings.¹⁶

The Dar al-Makhtutat facility consists of a set of interconnected traditional buildings appropriated by the state in 1983 as part of a massive redevelopment of Haifa Street. Some of the apartments in the rear of these buildings were occupied by private families. The Dar al-Makhtutat collection and reading room were housed in one building, and preservation and reception facilities were housed in another. While I was present in May 2003, one of the original owners of one of the houses in the complex visited collection director Osama Naqshbandi to state his claim for the restitution of his property. Neither the Dar al-Makhtutat staff members nor the family sharing the property with the Dar al-Makhtutat appeared surprised or upset by the visit. Since there are potential ownership claims of this kind to sort out, and since the facility complex cannot compare with modern structures in terms of climate control and security, it is unclear whether the manuscripts—removed to a bomb shelter for safekeeping prior to the invasion—will ultimately be returned to that same location.

The collection has a number of components apart from its own core collection of 47,000 manuscripts. According to Mr. Naqshbandi, in the course of the 1991 uprising following the Gulf War, it was estimated that about 20,000 manuscripts had been endangered by events in the provinces. In fact,

while only 346 manuscripts in provincial public facilities were confirmed lost and subsequently listed as such in an effort to recover them, an estimated 1,000 manuscripts from the Baraki, Kashani, and other private collections of Najaf and Karbala were reportedly taken to Iran in the course of the 1991 uprising. As a result of this experience, and in accordance with longstanding Ministry of Culture efforts to centralize all manuscript collections in one facility, several of the provincial collections were absorbed into the main collection of the Dar al-Makhtutat in Baghdad in the 1990s.

Other materials in the Dar al-Makhtutat collection were the result of a survey of private and public manuscript collections that had been carried out by each governorate in accordance with the 1974 Antiquities Law.¹⁷ These were kept in box files, which were removed along with the manuscripts prior to the 2003 invasion. Finally, other major components of the collection included the microfilms of 8 million folios from 15,000–20,000 manuscripts, and 250,000 images from illuminated and other rare manuscripts preserved on CD-Roms, all produced by the staff in the course of the 1990s.

Efforts to save this collection from the impending war began four months before the invasion and continued right up to the week immediately prior to the commencement of hostilities. Everything stored at the facility was transported to bomb shelter number 12 in Hayy Dakhiliyya. The 47,000 manuscripts of the Dar al-Makhtutat collection were packed into 500 trunks. Another 200 trunks contained 3,000 manuscripts from other collections held at Dar al-Makhtutat. There were also 83 trunks of rare books. The microfilms were taken to a second (undisclosed) location and the CD-Roms to a third (also undisclosed) location. According to Mr. Naqshbandi, the staff undertook such protective measures even though they did not have official permission to move the collection and were asked to slow their efforts by the Minister of Culture in order not to unsettle the population concerning the possibility of invasion. As a result of these initiatives, when looters entered the Dar al-Makhtutat facility on or after April 10, they were able to strip it of computers, microfilming equipment, and materials in its preservation laboratory—but no holdings were taken.

Fortunately, the bomb shelter where the manuscripts were stored was not targeted by invasion forces. On three occasions in April 2003, however, looters tried and failed to force the doors. On each occasion the “neighborhood” chased the looters away and burned their vehicles. According to Mr. Naqshbandi, relations between the neighborhood and U.S. forces soured in late April 2003 after a U.S. commander attempted to remove trunks from the shelter and transport them to the National Museum, which was by then under U.S. protection. Mr. Naqshbandi expressed disappointment with the lack of understanding by Western reporters of the efforts the staff had taken to preserve the collections, citing articles stating that 40,000 manuscripts had been “found” in a shelter.

Although the shelter was said to be climate-controlled, it is unclear whether long-term storage in this location might prove damaging to the materials stored there. Apart from the Dar al-Makhtutat collection, the following manuscripts are among those stored in the shelter:

- Iraqi Academy of Sciences: 667 manuscripts (including 68 unpublished Mustafa Jawad works)
- Mosul Central Library: 301 manuscripts
- University of Mosul Library: 122 manuscripts
- University of Tikrit Library: 40 manuscripts
- Kirkuk Central Library: 40 manuscripts
- University of Mustansiriyya (Baghdad) Library: unknown number of manuscripts
- University of Basra Library: unknown number of manuscripts

IRAQI ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (AL-MAJMA‘ AL-‘ILMI AL-‘IRAQI)

Located in Waziriyya, the Iraqi Academy of Sciences is a fully independent research institution dating back to the monarchic period.¹⁸ Intended to serve as an “Iraqi Académie Française,” the academy held collections of manuscripts, periodicals, foreign language books, and unpublished theses. It also contained an Internet computer lab with more than twenty terminals, a printing press, lecture rooms, and offices for affiliated researchers.

Although it is unclear on which day the academy was looted, the way it happened suggests that it occurred quite soon after the city’s fall. According to staff members, the pillage started after a U.S. tank crew crashed through the facility’s front gate, rolled over and crushed the academy’s main sign, removed the Iraqi flag flying at the entrance, and left. Looters then swarmed into the facility; stripped it of computers, air conditioners, electrical fixtures, furniture, and other movable items; and stole all the vehicles in the complex. The fact that the academy was not burned—and that many books were not stolen—suggests that the looting was not as organized as seems to have been the case with some of the other institutions. Academy staff blamed local poor people for what was essentially opportunistic theft.

Although the academy had in recent years transferred to the Dar al-Makhtutat the manuscripts mentioned above, it had retained over 2,000 manuscripts and 58,000 published works. Included in the stolen manuscripts were 93 unpublished works by the historian ‘Abbas al-‘Azawi and a Selçuk-era ‘Umar al-Suhrawardi manuscript. Roughly half of ‘Abbas al-‘Azawi’s unpublished works that were stolen in April had been returned by my visit in May 2003, and staff were hopeful that other parts of the collection would also be returned eventually. A catalog of the entire academy manuscript collection was published prior to the collection’s partial transfer to Dar al-Makhtutat. In addition, there was a handwritten catalog for the manuscripts that were retained in the academy, but it disappeared

along with the manuscripts. Finally, although photocopies of the entire manuscript collection were said to have been made, these copies were stolen along with the originals. The manuscripts room itself was completely empty during my visit.¹⁹

HOUSE OF WISDOM (BAYT AL-HIKMA)

Bayt al-Hikma is a semi-private center supporting research in the arts and humanities.²⁰ It is located next to the Ministry of Defense, on a large site also containing a thirteenth-century *madrassa* complex and the first Iraqi parliament building. The main building contained a lecture auditorium, a music room, a printing press, a computer lab, a library of Western publications, and a library of Middle Eastern publications.

Although the *madrassa* complex itself was relatively unharmed, an Ottoman costume exhibit housed in the complex was stolen. The main building was almost completely looted. Although fire had destroyed much of the second floor, when I toured the facility I noticed that two or three shelves of recovered publications had been placed in two rooms. Air conditioners, computers, printers, books, light fixtures, desks, and chairs, however, had been stripped from the complex. A courtyard on the ground level contained piles of office files, mostly accounting documents and administrative correspondence.

According to Dr. 'Abd al-Jabbar Naji, chair of the Bayt al-Hikma Department of History, on April 11, 2003, several groups of looters entered the building. In the morning they took air conditioners, generators, and other portable items of value. In the afternoon they stripped the computer lab, took a grand piano, and started to burn the main music hall. They then stripped the lecture auditorium, which may have also been hit by a bomb, as its roof was blown inward from the outside. The next day they returned, this time stripping the library and publications department of most of their books and valuable items. Although it is not known who the looters were, staff members who witnessed what happened were convinced that they were organized.

According to Dr. Naji, because of the 1974 Antiquities Law, Bayt al-Hikma was not officially authorized to collect manuscripts. As a result, it held a relatively small collection of about 100 manuscripts. However, the collection included several important items, such as a ninth-century Qur'an; a twelfth-century copy of *Maqamat al-Hariri*, an Ibn Sina philosophy text; and a nineteenth-century al-'Alusi manuscript concerning Baghdad. This entire collection disappeared, and unless the manuscripts reappear at some point, they are effectively lost because no microfilms or microfiche copies had been made of the collection.

Bayt al-Hikma also possessed several other useful research collections, but as all of the contents were copies, some of these collections could be replaced in the future from other sources. The collections included

- a 5,500 volume set of UK Foreign Office documents covering Iraq and the Gulf region, purchased from a library in Geneva;
- a five-volume set of French government documents relevant to World War I and World War II;
- U.S. Congressional documents concerning Iraq’s 1940 coup;
- certain documents related to the former Jewish community in Baghdad, which had mostly emigrated by the early 1950s;
- a fifteen-volume set of Ottoman *Tapu* property registration documents dating back to the eighteenth century; and
- a fifteen-volume set of Ottoman-era *Mahkama Shar‘iyya* court documents.

According to Dr. Naji, the Bayt al-Hikma Ottoman *Tapu* and *Mahkama Shar‘iyya* documents were copies of the original documents, which were held in the National Library. As these documents were part of the Ottoman and Hashemite-era archival collection that National Library and Archives director Saad Eskander estimates has been 60 percent destroyed (see my account above), it is possible that they have been effectively lost.

In May 2003 books from the Bayt al-Hikma collection were seen on sale in the square just outside the complex’s entrance. When I passed through this square, I noticed several recent-model computers and printers on sale on a donkey cart, as well as some issues of academic journals being sold on the sidewalk. At the time, Dr. Naji had recently unsuccessfully appealed for funding to finance the repurchase of equipment that had been stolen from the center, as well as for reconstituting the collections.

QADIRIYYA MOSQUE

This collection held 1,883 manuscripts, in addition to published works. Mr. Osama Naqshbandi, the Dar al-Mahktutat director at the time, stated that its condition was fine in May 2003, and a site visit by the Iraq Observatory Team in June 2003 reported the same (see Al-Tikriti, 2003; Johnson, 2005; Watenpaugh et al., 2003).

IRAQI JEWISH ARCHIVES

This collection was found partially submerged in a flooded basement of a *Mukhabarat* (Intelligence) facility by U.S. officials in May 2003. Promptly frozen and removed by Coalition Provisional Authority officials for restoration efforts by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in the United States, the collection has remained in the United States since its removal. According to a 2003 NARA report, the collection included “16th–20th century Jewish rare books, correspondence and document files, pamphlets, modern books, audio tape and parchment scrolls.”²¹ The NARA report estimated that 1.5–3 million dollars would be required to fully rescue and preserve the collection. However, in May 2005 National

Public Radio reported that document restoration efforts were stalled due to shortage of funds.²²

Some resentment has been expressed by Iraqi observers about the immense effort undertaken by occupation officials to salvage this collection when considered against the relative lack of urgency demonstrated for the Ottoman/Hashemite archival collections referred to above.²³ At the same time, some tension has arisen concerning the eventual disposition of the collection. The Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center has expressed interest in displaying recovered parts of the collection in its museum outside of Tel Aviv following the completion of NARA preservation efforts (Balint, 2005). Iraqi National Museum director Donny George has stated that CPA officials had signed a protocol allowing for a two-year loan of the materials to the United States for preservation, after which they were meant to be returned to Iraq. U.S. officials at NARA and the Library of Congress have not yet stated their intentions concerning the return of these materials to Iraq or elsewhere.

AL-HIDAYA LIBRARY (MAKTABAT AL-HIDAYA)

Mr. Osama Naqshbandi indicated that this collection had about 500 manuscripts, and its condition is unknown.

CHALDEAN PATRIARCHATE (DEIR AL-ABA AL-KRIMLIYIN)

According to Mr. Osama Naqshbandi, this collection had about 120 manuscripts, mostly consisting of the personal writings of al-Ustadh Mari al-Krimli, a Chaldean patriarch. The items in this collection were included in a published catalog of manuscripts completed by Dr. Boutros Haddad in the 1990s.²⁴ As Mr. Naqshbandi had not heard any negative news about this collection; he assumed that its condition was fine in 2003.

CONCLUSION

In the course of my site visits and interviews it became clear to me that, while in certain key cases the damage sustained by collections was not as severe as initially reported, there were significant losses and a great deal of work lies ahead to reconstitute the facilities involved. It also became clear that full restoration of the affected Iraqi manuscript collections and libraries will require the addressing of several needs, including

- the restoration of physical premises;
- the replacement of plundered equipment;
- the reconstitution of the collections involved;
- the preparation of a comprehensive inventory and catalog for all manuscript collections as they stand today;

- the replacement of published works and nonoriginal document copies lost in the looting;
- a project of comprehensive microfilming and data storage for all manuscripts and archival documents of value to guard against future losses; and
- the immediate and ongoing collection of contemporary Iraqi publications.

To address these needs would require a multi-million dollar set of investments. While the funds required to bring the damaged facilities back up to international standards is not insignificant, it pales in comparison to the estimated 1–2 trillion dollar cost of the 2003 invasion and subsequent occupation.²⁵ Since such investments might foster a certain amount of goodwill, they should be considered by the U.S. government, an external power potentially liable for the damages described here and in great need of local support and legitimacy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For the original report on which this article is based, see Nabil Al-Tikriti, "Iraq Manuscript Collections, Archives, and Libraries Situation Report," <http://www-oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/docs/nat.html>, posted on June 8, 2003, on the Iraq Crisis List. I would like to thank Jean-Marie Arnoult, Hala Fattah, Donny George, McGuire Gibson, Charles Jones, Lital Levy, Ibrahim al-Marashi, Edouard Méténier, Osama Naqshbandi, and Zayn al-Naqshbandi for various instances of informational and logistical assistance that went into the carrying out of this research. Although the situation in Iraq remains unstable, accounts continue to emerge concerning the 2003 invasion, and much of the information covered here is based on secondhand sources, I take full responsibility for whatever corrections will eventually be made to this article's content. Further information concerning contacts and sources can be obtained either through my original site report or through contacting me at naltikriti@yahoo.com.

APPENDIX

Table 1. The State of Iraq Manuscript Collections and Archives

Baghdad Collections	Holdings	Comments	Contacts
National Library & Archive (Dar al-Kutub wa al-Watha'iq)	Documents, published books.	Facility partially looted and burned	Saad Eskander Ra'ad Bardar
Ministry of Endowments & Religious Affairs Central Library (Maktabat al-Awqaf al- Markaziyya)	7,000 manuscripts	About 5,250 manuscripts transferred to undisclosed location; about 600-700 manuscripts burned; about 1,000-1,100 manuscripts looted; facility burned.	Buthayna 'Abd Allah Qaysi Hasan Freih Salah Karim Baqir Hamid Muhib al-Din Yasin 'Abd al-Karim Sa'id
Iraqi House of Manuscripts (Dar al-Makhtutat al- 'Iraqiyya) [formerly Dar Saddam lil-Makhtutat / Saddam House of Manuscripts]	47,000 own manuscripts; 3,000 other manuscripts from academies in Mosul, Tikrit, Kirkuk, Basra	Collection transferred to Shelter #12, Hayy Dakhiliyya; preservation facilities looted	Osama Naqshbandi Dhamya 'Abbas Samara'i
Iraqi Academy of Sciences (Al-Majma' al-'Ilmi al-Iraqi)	2,000 manuscripts; 58,000 published books	Facility looted, but not burned; about 80% of books looted; some manuscripts returned	Mahmud Hayyawi Ms. Juwan, "Umm Ibrahim," Muhammad Khudeir 'Abbas
House of Wisdom (Bayt al-Hikma)	100 manuscripts; U.S., French, Ottoman, and UK document copies	Facility looted and burned; some manuscripts may resurface	'Adnan Yasin Mustafa 'Abd al-Jabbar Naji
Iraqi Jewish Archives	Various	Flooded, now in the United States	None
Qadiriyya Mosque Collection	1,883 manuscripts	Condition OK	None
Deir al-Abba al-Krimliyin	120 manuscripts	Christian manuscripts; condition thought to be ok	None
Maktabat al-Hidaya, Baghdad?	500 manuscripts	Condition unknown	None

NOTES

1. The quotation from the title, “Stuff happens,” was U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld’s response in April 2003 when asked in April 2003 about widespread looting following the fall of Baghdad. See <http://www.cnn.com/2003/US/04/11/sprj.irq.pentagon/>.
2. For details concerning such international accords, see <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde140892003>, or <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/iraq/ihlfaqoccupation.htm>.
3. For example, Professor McGuire Gibson of the University of Chicago made several appeals to US officials for Iraqi cultural protection in the weeks prior to the invasion (see Glauber, 2003). For a general discussion of U.S. military policy concerning Iraqi cultural assets during the 2003 invasion, see C. Johnson (2005).
4. For one example, see <http://www.danielpipes.org/article/1066>. This point is also discussed in I. Johnson (2005).
5. Cruickshank (2003) reported this claim about Iraqi National Museum staff in a BBC documentary based on a visit he made to Baghdad in late April 2003.
6. In my own interviews and site visits, I encountered nothing to suggest that manuscripts collection staff acted improperly vis-à-vis their respective collections.
7. From my own interviews, it is clear that while most outside observers may not have attached direct blame to U.S. authorities for the destruction suffered in 2003, many Iraqis believe that the events of 2003 were a case of intentional and planned negligence. Rebecca Knuth (2003) has explored in great depth the theory and motivation lying behind several other prominent examples of library destruction in the last century. When one compares the events of 2003 against the cases analyzed by Knuth, the motivation behind a possibly planned negligence grows less far-fetched.
8. See <http://web.amnesty.org/library/index/engmde140892003>.
9. According to the protocols of the 1954 Hague Convention and customary international law regarding belligerent occupation, “cultural property is entitled to special protection; the occupying power must take measures to preserve and safeguard it,” and “[a]ny loss of value from their [public property] use must be compensated.” For more information, see <http://www.hrw.org/campaigns/iraq/ihlfaqoccupation.htm>.
10. The most significant reports and reference resources to date concerning the postinvasion state of Iraq’s manuscript collections, archives, and libraries include those by the following individuals or groups: Nabil Al-Tikriti, Jean-Marie Arnoult, Saad Eskander, Ian Johnson, Shayee Khanaka, Edouard Méténier, Zayn al-Naqshbandi, Jeff Spurr, Keith Watenpaugh et. al., and the Library of Congress Mission. For links to each of these reports, see the Middle East Librarians Association Committee on Iraqi Libraries Web site: <http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/melairaq.html>.
11. My discussion here is based on the following reports: I. Johnson (2005), Spurr (2005), and Watenpaugh et. al. (2003).
12. Saad Eskander presentation, posted by Ian Stringer, Iraq Crisis List, November 9, 2004, posted in October 2004, <http://www.infotoday.com/it/dec04/eskander.shtml>.
13. On May 29, 2003, local scholar Zayn al-Naqshbandi and I interviewed the Awqaf library staff and inspected the library remains. The names of the interviewed staff numbers are included in the appendix. For more details concerning the Awqaf Library, see Al-Tikriti (2003) and Zayn al-Naqshbandi, “Report on the Central Awqaf Library,” Iraq Crisis List, June 28, 2004, <http://oi.chicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/zan.html>.
14. Zayn al-Naqshbandi, “Report on the Central Awqaf Library,” Iraq Crisis List, June 28, 2004.
15. This facility was formerly known as Dar Saddam lil-Makhtutat, or the Saddam House of Manuscripts. On May 27–28, 2003, I interviewed Osama Naqshbandi, the director of the collection at the time (no relation to Zayn al-Naqshbandi), and Dhama ‘Abbas Samarra’, his wife, assistant, and successor, at the Dar al-Makhtutat. During that interview Mr. Naqshbandi provided a great deal of general—and tentative—information on smaller Iraqi manuscript collections, which is included in the appendix.
16. For example, Dan Cruickshank stated incorrectly—and rather crassly—that Dar al-Makhtutat manuscript trunks housed in the bomb shelter were “from the National Museum . . . but were only full of books” (Cruickshank, 2003). U.S. Marine Colonel Matthew Bogdanos,

- the head of a U.S. military investigation into the museum looting, repeatedly confused the National Museum and the Dar al-Makhtutat in presentations made in 2003–2004 (I. Johnson, 2005).
17. The 1974 Antiquities Law classified manuscripts and other cultural items as property of the Iraqi people, effectively placing all manuscript collections under state supervision and forbidding the private collection of manuscripts. The surveys carried out by each governorate (a province ruled by a centrally appointed governor) were ordered as part of the implementation of this law.
 18. On May 29, 2003, I visited the academy with Mr. Zayn al-Naqshbandi and briefly interviewed Mr. Muhammad Khudeir 'Abbas, the director of administration. We were also given a tour of the grounds by two employees who had witnessed the looting of the academy. For further information, see Al-Tikriti (2003) and Watenpaugh et al. (2003).
 19. For further details concerning the state of this facility's other holdings during my visit, see Al-Tikriti (2003).
 20. On May 29, I interviewed Dr. 'Abd al-Jabbar Naji, the chair of the Bayt al-Hikma Department of History. For further information, see Al-Tikriti (2003) and Watenpaugh et al. (2003).
 21. "The Iraqi Jewish Archive Preservation Report," October 2, 2003, posted in January 2004, <http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/mela/IraqiJewishArchiveReport.htm>.
 22. See <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4645146>.
 23. This opinion was expressed to me by several Iraqi academics during an international conference on Iraq in June 2004.
 24. For a description of this catalog, see <http://www.grac.it/BAC/BAC3.pdf>.
 25. In January 2006 the economist Joseph Stiglitz and budget expert Linda Bilmes issued a joint paper estimating the long-term economic costs of the invasion and occupation of Iraq at 1–2 trillion U.S. dollars. For more information, see <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Iraq/Story/0,2763,1681119,00.html>.

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