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Abstract of paper to be presented at the conference.

For details of the conference programme go to www.iraqistudies.org

Speaker: Jeff Spurr, Harvard University, spurr@fas.harvard.edu

Title: Devastation and Controversy: The Case of Iraqi Libraries and Archives since 2003

Abstract:

The unplanned for consequences of the 2003 Invasion of Iraq had devastating effects on cultural and educational institutions throughout the country. This was particularly clear in the case of universities and their libraries, and other important libraries and archives, most notably the Iraq National Library and Archive (INLA). This paper will briefly describe these circumstances and effects, with an emphasis on the exemplary and exceptional case of the INLA. It will particularly address the failure to provide adequate funding on the part of critical actors for institutional rehabilitation, and the ongoing controversies concerning Iraqi documents seized by various parties soon after the invasion, and efforts to see that they are repatriated to Iraq. These include the millions of documents appropriated by the invading forces, particularly American, those taken by the Iraq Memory Foundation (now in the US), and the complicated case of the so-called Iraqi Jewish Archive.