

The Nahrein Network: Annual Report

Year 4: 1 October 2024 – 31 August 2025

August 2025 • Misha Enayat, Mehiyar Kathem, Zainab Mahdi, and Eleanor Robson

In this final annual report for the Nahrein Network, we report briefly on our achievements against the objectives for the year, agreed by the Management Committee last September and shared in the 2023-24 Annual Report. We also summarise spending against budget.

For overall reflections on the Network's achievements and legacy since 2017, please see the Evaluation and Impact Report published at <https://www.nahreinnetwork.org>.

1. Achievements against Objectives for Year 4: October 2024–September 2025

1.1. Governance

- Agree timetable, budget and communications strategy with the donor and Management Committee, for closure at the end of August 2025
 - Successfully achieved
- No new NNMC members to be recruited, as we have a full quorum; we will not seek to replace Paul or Rozhen as Co-Directors
 - Existing NNMC members remained constructively engaged right until the closure of the Network. Rozhen wrapped up and wrote up her team's prior research and outreach, funded through a 12-month devolved grant.
- The MoU with the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research is due to be signed by the end of October 2024, a full two years since the process was initiated
 - The Iraqi Prime Minister's visit was delayed yet again due to an escalation of the Israel-Gaza conflict. In the end, the MoU was signed in his presence in London in January. We postponed public announcement of the Network's closure until after this had been achieved.
- Evaluate success of the Network since its inception in 2017
 - Please see the Evaluation and Impact Report published at <https://www.nahreinnetwork.org>.
- Support team members into their next posts
 - As soon as the Network closes, Director Professor Eleanor Robson will move to emeritus status at UCL for personal reasons and will continue to research and offer consultancy on a freelance basis. Deputy Director Mehiyar Kathem is currently in contract negotiations with a highly regarded university for a lectureship in heritage studies. Dr Misha Enayat and Dr Nadia Ait Saïd-Ghanem are under active consideration for jobs and grants in their respective fields. Ms Zainab Mahdi is currently finishing a part-time MA in anthropology at SOAS and will consider her options once her degree has been awarded.

1.2. Devolved projects

- Move Rozhen to devolved funding to allow her to write up
 - Achieved: see above
- Support to completion the devolved research projects we have agreed to fund

- Five projects have completed their work; three more are due to finish within the next few months. See table below.

Project title	Status	Start	End date
025: Memorialisation of Troubled Past (OVS)	Finished	01/12/2023	31/11/2024
039: Kirkuk Minorities	Finished	01/12/2023	31/07/2025
040: Baghdadi Cultural Centre Visitor Engagement (Bab Baghdad)	Finished	01/05/2024	31/08/2025
051: Old Basra Architecture	Live	01/04/2024	31/03/2026
104: Halabja Genocide Memorial Sites	Live	01/11/2024	30/10/2025
070: Displacement of the Kirkuk Citadel Residents	Finished	01/02/2025	31/07/2025
079: Socio-cultural layers of Baghdad/ Al Mutanabbi Quarter	Finished	01/02/2025	31/08/2025
CHO-KISSR work packages (2024-2025)	Live	01/10/2024	30/09/2025

- Interim and final reports can be found at <https://nahreinnetwork.org/research-projects>
- Agree closure plans with PIs of projects due to run past the Network's end date
 - Done. All payments made, and plans for completion and spending agreed with PIs.
- Hold concluding colloquium online or in Baghdad in spring/summer 2025
 - Delivered a very successful two-day Farewell Conference in Baghdad in April 2025, with over thirty speakers and more than 120 attendees. A brief report is on our blog at <https://blogs.ucl.ac.uk/nahrein/2025/06/25/the-nahrein-networks-farewell-conference-in-baghdad/>
 - Ran two Knowledge Exchange webinars in July 2025, on AcademiQ and the devolved funding schemes respectively. Recordings are on our YouTube channel at <https://youtu.be/i3EmNgHigzs> and <https://youtu.be/69mF8oGGq7s> respectively.

1.3. Capacity building

- With BISI, hold a final round of Visiting Scholarships in autumn 2024, with mid-November application deadline
 - Applications were received and shortlisted as follows:

Candidate type	Male	Female	Academic	Professional	Total
Applicants					24
Eligible	14	4	11	5	18
Shortlisted	5	2	4	3	7

- The following four two-month Scholarships were offered and accepted, each with a budget of £10,000. As most placements will start after the Network has closed, BISI will take full responsibility for their wellbeing and success:

Applicant	Project	Employer	UK Host	Start Date
089 Karzan Omar Ali	Democratic Government as a Prerequisite for Preserving Christian Cultural Heritage in KRI	University of Sulaimani	University of St Andrews	01/08/2025
093 Lanja Hossein Abdullah	Interactive Geoheritage Map of Iraqi Kurdistan	University of Sulaimani	University of Liverpool	29/09/2025
095 Mahmood Adil Al-Muslehi	Sociolinguistic study of the Assyrian community in Baghdad	Alfarabi Middle School, Baghdad	University of Edinburgh	20/09/2025

096 Ahmed Talib Abdulhussein	The role of stakeholders in adaptive reuse strategies for heritage buildings in Iraq	State Board of Antiquities and Heritage	UCL	04/09/2025
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- In addition, the five scholars from Round 5 (awarded earlier in 2024) were successfully hosted in the UK. Reports on their placements are available at <https://nahreinnetwork.org/visiting-scholars>

Visiting Scholar	Project	Employer	UK Host	Start Date
Prof. Ahmed Al-Imarah	Iraq's Higher Education Cultural Heritage Curricula, Pedagogy and Teaching Materials: Mapping, Assessment, Evaluation and Knowledge Exchange	University of Kufa	University of Oxford	09/01/2025
Dr Bzhar Othman Ahmed	The Work and Heritage of the Jews of Koya (1918-1951)	University of Soran, Erbil	London School of Economics	11/01/2025
Mustafa Yahya Faraj	The Gates of Nineveh: Challenges, Sustainability and Strengthening Community Relations in Mosul	State Board of Antiquities and Heritage	UCL	22/03/2025
Dr Alaa Fadhil Al-Ameri	Oral History in Iraq: a methodological and practical guide	Mustansiriyah University, Baghdad	University of Newcastle	01/05/2025
Dr Hawraman Fariq Karim	Memorial Sites and Genocide of Halabja	University of Sulaimani	University of Durham	06/09/2025

- As always, we are extremely grateful to our review panel, which includes former Visiting Scholarship holders, and to the team at BISI for delivering the programme with us. We are glad that BISI is able to continue this scheme—which they initiated post-2003—with funding from another philanthropic source.
- For AcademIQ, merge the online Academic Research Course with elements of the Critical Research Skills course in development, and run this at national scale for MoHESR. Wrap up cohorts 2–3 of the Academic Mentorship programme
 - Delivered very successfully in partnership with the Iraqi Ministry of Culture. Detailed reports of this year's work are available at <https://nahreinnetwork.org/academiq>
- Support our three Graduate Students and ensure that they each have the financial wherewithal to complete their final year of study in 2025–26
 - Achieved. PhD student Niyan Hussein Ibrahim passed her upgrade examinations in the spring and has since taken two months of paid maternity leave. She is on track for submission in a year's time. Masters student Wesam Youssef has interrupted her studies for family reasons and will resume her studies on the MA Ancient History in January 2026. Warsheen Mirani has secured UCL accommodation and arrives in London in mid-September to begin his MSc in Sustainable Cultural Heritage. Arrangements have been made with all three students' host departments for the payment of their fees, stipends and research allowances in academic year 2025-26.

1.4. Core research

- Wrap up Kish Project: complete monograph; employ Dr Nadia full time from February 2025, run digital humanities training in spring 2025, and hold final workshop at RAI Prague in July 2025
 - The project's bilingual English-Arabic website is now live at <https://oracc.org/kish>. It includes the legacy object catalogue of the Field Museum's NEH-funded Kish Project (2004-11), in collaboration with the Field Museum, the Ashmolean Museum, and Penn Museum, as well as

many historical essays written by Dr Nadia Aït Saïd-Ghanem, a complete catalogue and partial bilingual edition of the 2000 cuneiform tablets from Kish in the Ashmolean Museum, as well as many other resources.

- Professor Robson has written a complete draft of her open-access monograph, *Knowledge Repatriation and the Written Heritage of Ancient Iraq* (Elements in Critical Heritage Studies), Cambridge University Press and expects it to be published, open-access in winter 2025-26. An Arabic translation has also been commissioned.
- She has also collected extensive archival materials for a second monograph, on the history of the Oxford-Field Museum Expedition to Kish (1922–23), which she plans to write over the coming year.
- In place of running digital humanities training in Iraq, she has given extensive practical support and advice to the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative's plan for workshops in Iraqi universities in November 2025.
- The workshop on *The Forgotten City of Kish* at the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in July 2025 comprised five papers, by Robson, Saïd-Ghanem, former project researcher Dr Parsa Daneshmand, Mr Raad Hamid, head of the State Board of Antiquities and Heritage in Babil province, and Dr Ahmed Aziz, head of the Babylon Museum and an expert on Kish. The proceedings will appear as a special section of BISI's journal *IRAQ* 87 (2026), guest-edited by Robson.
- The Politics of Cultural heritage in Iraq: see Mehiyar's monograph to publication and support him for follow-up research in Iraq
 - The monograph on the politics of cultural heritage in Iraq is now under contract with Bloomsbury Press. It has been through the peer review process and work to prepare it for publication is about to begin. The tentative title is *Statebuilding and Politics of Cultural Heritage in Iraq*.
 - Mehiyar is also working on a research paper for a conference in October 2025 organised by the Aga Khan Programme on the topic of grassroots cultural heritage in Iraq.
 - An article on decolonization and ethics in cultural heritage is currently under review with *The International Journal of Heritage Studies*.
- The Network also funded Dr Mark Weeden to deliver a publication project with Iraqi colleagues on the Iraqi-led archaeological investigations at Tell Wilayah, southern Iraq.
 - With these funds, he visited the site in April 2025 and met his co-authors and other key stakeholders.
 - Research assistants are preparing technical drawings and editing the manuscript.
 - This work will continue after the end of the Network, and the residue of this grant will transfer to Dr Weeden in UCL's Greek and Latin Department.

1.5. Policy and consultancy

- Continue advisory work on KRI's new research development strategy
 - The KRI froze this work ahead of an anticipated general election later this year. There were thus no opportunities to contribute.
- Support Mehiyar to continue policy-driven research
 - A hoped-for collaboration with Chatham House on corruption in cultural heritage institutions proved too logistically complicated to get off the ground at short notice, given the sensitivities involved, as well as irreconcilable difference in budgeting expectations between UCL and CH. Nevertheless, Mehiyar continues to collect data and to work on other policy-relevant publications.

1.6. Media, comms, finances and legacy

- Plan and deliver wrap-up events in Iraq/online and closing reports
 - Wrap-up events and closing reports as described above.
 - A final Newsletter was released in the last week of August.
 - The mailing list, after opt-outs up to 1 September, will be handed over to BISl.
 - The legacy website, <https://www.nahreinnetwork.org> went live in July and the old site will shut down. A simple webpage with a redirect is now online at <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/social-historical-sciences/history/research/research-projects-and-centres/nahrein-network>
 - Email addresses have Out of Office messages and will no longer be monitored.