

### **From the Editor's Keyboard:**

This issue of the *Bulletin* represents a call to action!

Never has the connection between expert knowledge and policymaking seemed so important, so necessary, and yet so lacking, as right now in terms of the Middle East. At the very time that the Bush administration is attempting to impose a new order on the Middle East, the field of Middle East studies is under fire like never before by self-appointed watchdogs wildly spraying accusations of malfeasance, “anti-Americanism,” even collusion with enemies. Members of MESA, and readers of the *Bulletin* thus have a choice – to hunker down and wait for the storm to blow over, hoping the damage is not too great, or to stand up, raise their voices and do what scholars and intellectuals do best: share our knowledge, and engage in public discourse through our scholarship and teaching.

In this issue, Lisa Anderson, Keith Watenpaugh, Hala Fattah, and Jeffrey Spurr call on MESA members to rise to the challenges confronting our organization and our professions, in the United States and in Iraq. Whether it is through direct action, or through writing, teaching, advising on policy, through public lectures, or outreach activities, they remind us of our responsibilities as the producers of expert knowledge to use that knowledge to challenge bigotry, ignorance and apathy – not in support of a “correct” policy, but in support of a global exchange of ideas involving people of all walks of life, and all levels of knowledge and expertise. And this discourse must include those whose expertise does not include contemporary state building, foreign policy and so forth, for the relevance and importance of Middle East studies lies not in the ability of scholars to predict the future or offer prescriptions for specific problems, but in our ability to relate to others the richness, the vibrancy, the diversity of Middle East history, societies and cultures, through our own rich, vibrant and diverse discourse.

Issue 38/1 of the *Bulletin* reflects some of the richness, vibrancy and diversity in Middle East studies. We continue with a series on the global state of Middle East studies with Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila’s essay on Finland, and we have included review essays and reviews on a wide variety of books and films of interest. I hope you will find this issue of the *Bulletin* both interesting and provocative.