

# MARGOLIOUTH SYMPOSIUM

To celebrate the return of Arabic to New College, Oxford



Left: Margoliouth as a scholar at Winchester, 1875 (Winchester College Archives)  
Right: Margoliouth as a fellow of New College, 1921 (New College Archives)

**November 13, 2025**

With generous support from The New College Symposia Fund and  
The Farouk Toukan Fund for Arabic at New College

Arabic returned to New College as an undergraduate subject in 2024 after an absence of many years. This followed the establishment of a new fellowship in Arabic in 2023, named in honour of New College's most famous Arabist, Professor D.S. Margoliouth (1858-1940).

Margoliouth was the leading scholar of Arabic and Islamic studies in Britain during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. He came up to New College as an undergraduate in 1877 and was later elected a fellow in 1881. In 1889, he was appointed the Laudian Professor of Arabic, a position he held until his retirement in 1937. During this period, Margoliouth published widely on Arabic literature, Middle Eastern history, and Islam, drawing on a deep knowledge of languages which also included Greek, Latin, Syriac, Hebrew, Ethiopic, and Turkish. Margoliouth hailed from a family of Jewish converts to Anglicanism and in 1899, took up holy orders. Along with his wife Jessie Payne Smith, a prominent orientalist in her own right, he was active in social and political causes. These included the women's suffrage movement and the campaign to protect persecuted Christians in the Ottoman Empire and persecuted Jews in Europe.

This symposium, organised to celebrate the return of Arabic to New College, will consider Margoliouth's rich life and legacy.

*For questions, please contact the organiser: [christian.sahner@new.ox.ac.uk](mailto:christian.sahner@new.ox.ac.uk)*

## SPECIAL EXHIBITION OF MANUSCRIPTS AND PRINTED BOOKS

New College, Lecture Room 6

11:30 am – 2:15 pm

“Babel: Arabic, Hebrew, and Languages of the Levant in New College Library, Oxford”

Organised by Christopher Skelton-Foord, Librarian, New College

## MARGOLIOUTH SYMPOSIUM

New College, McGregor Matthews Room

2:15-2:30 pm

Welcome

Will Poole, John Galsworthy Fellow and Tutor in English; Senior Tutor, New College

2:30-3:15 pm

“Margoliouth: A Man of his Times, A Man Ahead of his Times”

Christian C. Sahner, Associate Professor of Islamic History, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Margoliouth Fellow in Arabic, New College

3:15-4:00 pm

“Margoliouth and Arabic”

Julia Bray, AlBabtain Laudian Professor of Arabic emerita, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Fellow emerita of St John’s College

4:00-4:30 pm

Coffee break

4:30-5:15 pm

“Margoliouth: From Homer to Tanukhi and Beyond”

Robin Lane Fox, University Reader in Ancient History emeritus, Faculty of Classics; Fellow emeritus of New College

5:15-6:00 pm

“Mrs Margoliouth: Jessie Payne Smith, Syriac Scholar and Suffragist”

David G.K. Taylor, Associate Professor of Aramaic and Syriac, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies; Fellow of Wolfson College

## RECEPTION

New College, Founder’s Library

6:00 pm

All are welcome