

## **LIBRARY REPORT**

**For the period April to August 2017**

### **Thomas Manning Archive**

There was a sympathetic article highlighting the archive and the Society in the European print edition of *China Daily*.

We agreed to host a visit from the Charles Lamb Society to see the archive in October, including a lecture from the Librarian.

### **Digitization**

The three Persian manuscripts on long-term loan at Cambridge University Library have been fully digitized, and these are now visible on the Cambridge University Digital Library. We are grateful to Dr Barbara Brend for agreeing to fund the digitization of the *Masnavi* and *Gulistan*, and to Professor Charles Melville and the Cambridge Shahnama Project for the digitization of the Juki *Shahnama*. The digital manuscripts were launched at a very enjoyable and well-attended event at Cambridge University Library in early July, which coincided with the 39th MELCom International conference, and the 50th anniversary of Melcom UK.

### **RAS Archives**

The sorting of the RAS Institutional Archives has progressed better than hoped. All the records in the strong room are now sorted into their appropriate categories except for a few Miscellaneous Boxes. The next stage is to run a pilot with one of the categories to enable the modern records to feed appropriately into the archives and for archival material that has been stored in the offices to be accessioned. The process has begun with the section Awards and Medals, and the archivist is currently gleaning the material from offices and computers to then assess, organize and catalogue.

Work has continued with the Personal Papers too, and the Catalogues of the Papers of Daniel Gogerly, Aurel Stein and William Adair Nelson are now available on Archives Hub. The Papers of Brian Houghton Hodgson are also progressing and the pre-cataloguing list now includes items previously unlisted. Sorting through the Institutional Archive boxes has also led to the identification of some further small sets of Personal Papers including some for Hugo George Rawlinson, Horace Hayman Wilson, Graves Haughton and others.

The sorting of the Miscellaneous Boxes is both a challenge and a delight. One of the great finds has been a missing letter from the Manning Archive (missing since at least the 1990s) which was kindly identified for us by Professor Lawrence Wong. Other Manuscripts have been identified by Twitter followers.

One of the Miscellaneous boxes became the source for a talk given by the archivist to the South Asian Archives and Library Group (SAALG) conference at the Weston Library in Oxford, which also resulted in an offer of help in identifying a Nepali MS, previously labelled as Tibetan.

The conservation of the glass slides is now almost complete and the packaging is ready to put them into photographic conservation quality boxes.

Our social media presence continues to flourish, not only with increased numbers of followers but also in generating enquiries and in helping with identification of material. We currently have 4240 followers on Twitter and 354 people signed up to receive notification of a new blog post.

The Archivist and Librarian have been invited to repeat their lecture on Sir Richard Burton and Thomas Manning to the UCL Institute of Archaeology next March.

(Nancy Charley)

### **RAS Collections Open Evening**

We held an RAS Collections Open Evening in May, featuring presentations from Dr Gordon Johnson, Lionel Knight, Bethia Grice, and Jasdip Singh Dhillon, which all focused on items from the RAS collections. We also prepared an exhibition of some lesser-seen items from the collections. The evening was a great success, serving to highlight our collections, their impact, and the work that is being done with them.

We are planning to hold the next Open Evening on 21 November.

### **Donations**

The Society was grateful for the gift of a painting, *Conversation Piece*, from Professor Francis Robinson, which depicts the Director and the past four Presidents of the Society in conversation.

We agreed to take a further 15 books from the collection of our late Fellow John Leach. These mainly deal with Asian musical traditions. We also agreed to take eight books on India and Tibet from the collection of Professor Sir Anthony Epstein, who has made a note of our agreement with his executors.

### **Users and enquiries**

The library had 79 visits between April and August (2016: 108; 2015: 79), and replied to 135 remote enquiries (2016: 126; 2015: 95). The collections most referred to were Persian manuscripts, the RAS archive, Indian art collections, and books on India.

## **Cataloguing**

Between April and August we added 1823 records to the online catalogue, including 923 pamphlets, 591 books, 146 manuscripts, and 103 photographs. This is an increase from 1695 records for the same period in 2016. Significantly, the collection of South Indian Sanskrit palm leaf manuscripts (Whish Collection) is now completely catalogued online.

## **Volunteers**

We continue to benefit greatly from the help of Volunteers. Ian Scholey is continuing to list and repackage the Barbara Ingham slides; Nyima Stewart is working with the Quaritch Wales photographs; Gehad Quisay is in the process of completing the list for the Papers of W.E.D. Allen. We also have two new volunteers since the last report: Jivanpal Singh is working on the Papers of Henry Beveridge (which we are discovering are properly the Papers of Alexander Rogers); and Amy Matthewson is working with the China glass slides.

Carly Bishop completed her placement with us as part of her MA in Art History and Curation with Photography at Sussex. She worked mainly with the Howell and Stein Collections and they have now been repackaged and fully catalogued. All the previously listed photographs have now been fully catalogued and repackaged. Sussex University have already enquired about us taking another placement student next year and we hope that a forthcoming placement will enable previously unlisted photographs to be catalogued and appropriately housed.

We are extremely grateful to Kathy Lazenbatt for adding detailed catalogue records for all of the South Indian Sanskrit manuscripts (Whish Collection) to the online catalogue. This is a significant achievement which increases the visibility of the collection.

Roger Parsons and Sarah Burrell have continued to catalogue books from our main library sequence. We are also grateful to the members of our NADFAS team, who have continued to carry out book repairs.

The Southeast Asian Art Academic Programme at SOAS approached us about the possibility of taking a postgraduate student from the Alphawood programme for an internship. We have expressed our interest and hope to take a placement student from the programme next year.

## **Conservation**

Four students doing the MA in Conservation at Camberwell College of Arts conserved items from our collections as part of their final year projects. The projects were all carried out to an impressively high standard, and we are grateful to Isana Skeete, Laurent Cruveillier, Joey Shuker and Rebecca Snow for their care and attention in working with our collections, and to the staff at Camberwell for arranging and supervising these projects.

The items were exhibited at Camberwell after the conservation was completed, and the projects were promoted via our blog. We also hope to feature talks from the conservators at future Collections Open Evenings.

The Jambudvipa (RAS 069.001) was conserved in preparation for its loan to the Science Museum. Additionally, several Malay manuscripts were conserved in preparation for digitization, and loan to the National Library of Singapore; while some of our glass slides have been conserved. We are grateful to David Jacobs and Mark Barnard for overseeing this work. We are also grateful to David and Mark for preparing a quotation to restore a C18th map of the South China Sea, donated by Sir George Staunton.

### **Reprographic services**

There were 892 digital copies made from RAS collections between April and August. This included 254 copies made by RAS staff, for which we charged £459.

### **Visits and conferences**

We were delighted to host a visit from the Cambridge Institute of Archaeology as part of a tour of London collections on the history of Cuneiform studies. The visit centered on the Rawlinson Archive. We also hosted a visit of students from SOAS to see some of our Persian manuscripts.

### **Loans to exhibitions**

The painting *Madhu Rao Narayan, the Maratha Peshwa with Nana Fadnavis and attendants* by James Wales has returned from loan and was installed in the Library Reading Room. We are waiting for the conservation of its frame to be completed, so it can be displayed in its frame. The return of the Wales, along with the donation of the *Conversation Piece*, prompted a re-hang of some of our artworks in the Lecture Theatre and Reading Room.

The National Library of Singapore requested about 20 Malay manuscripts (including several early printed books) for an exhibition on textual culture, *Tales from the Malay world*. The Director accompanied the manuscripts to Singapore and oversaw the installation. The exhibition runs until 25 February 2018.

The Science Museum requested the loan of a Jambudvipa (Jain cosmological chart), RAS 069.001, in addition to the Hindu almanac already requested, for the *Illuminating India* exhibition. The Jambudvipa was conserved in preparation for the loan.

We sent several images of drawings from the Hodgson Collection to be included in photographic exhibitions in Kathmandu, on the architectural history of the Kasthamandap. This was organized by Prof. Robin Coningham as part of a UNESCO project. The photographs were displayed in several world heritage sites and positive feedback was conveyed about the impact of featuring these early drawings. The images will now also feature in an exhibition at the Oriental Museum in Durham, which runs until February.

Ed Weech  
Librarian