

LIBRARY REPORT

For the period April to August 2018

Digital Library

The Digital Library received almost 8500 page views between April and August, based on over 2100 visits from almost 1500 users. Three fifths of users browsed in English, and one fifth in French; one fifth of users were from France, closely followed by the UK and USA, then India, Nepal, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and China. The main collections consulted were Malay manuscripts and the Manning archive, and the main individual items consulted were the Gulistan (RAS Persian 258) and Juki Shahnamah (RAS Persian 239).

We will continue to try and add more content to the collections as opportunities become available, in order to entice more visitors to the site. We were pleased to be able to add the first 35 manuscripts from the Palm Leaf digitization project in late Summer.

We held a launch event for the Digital Library in early April, after which the Librarian was invited by Max Communications to give the opening talk at their Heritage Conference at the end of May. The text of that talk is now available on the Society's blog. The Librarian has been asked to give a further talk on the Digital Library at the NACIRA conference in December, taking place at Asia House. The project has evinced significant interest from a number of libraries and heritage institutions and we have received several detailed enquiries and visits from a variety of institutions.

Thomas Manning Archive

The Manning Archive has proved to be one of the most popular collections on the new Digital Library.

In April, the Librarian gave a lecture on the Manning Archive at a conference on Romantic literature at the Sorbonne, Paris, and a further lecture on Manning, in August, at the Friends of Coleridge conference in Cambridge. The lecture he delivered last year for the Charles Lamb Society has since been published in their bulletin.

RAS Archives

A considerable number of smaller Collections of Papers have been catalogued on to Archives Hub in the last few months. These are:

- Collections Policy Documents
- Notes on Cuddapah
- The Papers of Clinton Thomas Dent

- Papers of David Lockhart Robertson Lorimer and Emily Overend Lorimer
- Papers of Hugh George Rawlinson
- Papers of Michael John Rowlandson
- Papers of Sir Michael Cavanagh Gillett
- Papers of William Claxton Peppé
- Royal Asiatic Society Public School Medal
- Royal Asiatic Society Universities Prize Essay Fund

As can be seen from the above list these include both Personal Papers and RAS Institutional Records. The Collections Policy catalogue marks the beginning of the process of integrating records management and archives. The new GDPR regulations have provided impetus to organise the records of the Society. All record making activities have been listed and work has begun on sorting the Collections Records – i.e. records produced in the care and delivery of services connected with the Collections of the Society. A File Plan listing the record-making areas has been arranged and a Retention Schedule produced for current records. The Policy documents are now organised, the Committee Minutes and Acquisition records partially so. These records also marked a new phase of working with creating archival electronic documents.

Following the acquisition of the A.C. Graham Archive and Library, an initial appraisal of his Papers has been undertaken and the material rehoused in archive quality packaging. Arranging and cataloguing will be undertaken in the coming months.

In line with new GPDR regulations there has been a new Registration Form produced for researchers visiting the Reading Room. Signing up to receive notification of the blog has also been adapted to reflect the necessity of gaining consent to keep recipients' details.

Our Twitter following continues to grow, as does the number of people who subscribe to our blog: we have 5844 Twitter followers and 578 blog subscribers.

Nancy Charley

Library Management System

We decided to proceed with Koha as the new Library Management System, which should be functional by January 2019.

Donations/Acquisitions

We accepted the donation of the A.C. Graham Archive and Library, posting an article on the blog announcing the acquisition of the collection. We also need to consider the planning of future publicity for the collection once we have reached a suitable point in the arrangement and understanding of the material.

A further acquisition was the gravestone of Sir Stamford Raffles, donated by the stone mason who replaced this gravestone with a new one.

Brotherton Library

The Librarian arranged to visit the Brotherton Library to see their “ex-RAS Collection” of Chinese books in situ during September 2018.

Users and enquiries

The library received 129 visits from researchers between April and August, up from 79 last year. We also replied to 159 remote enquiries during this period, up from 135 for the same period in 2017. The collections which generated the most enquiries were Persian manuscripts, RAS archives, the Quaritch Wales archives and photographs, Raffles Collection, JRAS, and the Tod Collection.

Cataloguing

We added 726 records to the online catalogue between April and August, including records for 575 books. The cataloguing of the pamphlet has now been largely completed, and the same number of books has been catalogued as during summer 2017.

Volunteers

We continue to have an active programme of volunteers, interns and placement students.

Argula Rublack completed a two-week work placement during the spring, as part of her MA in Library and Information Studies at UCL. Argula assisted with a variety of professional tasks, including the cataloguing of some Japanese books and a project to assess and catalogue our miscellaneous journals.

Ian Scholey continues to work on the slide collections. Fu Yang continues to translate Chinese materials belonging to Staunton and others. Thomas O’Connor has begun volunteering, and is working on cataloguing the Papers for the Burton Memorial Medal.

James Povey finished volunteering and is starting an MPhil in Oxford. James did tremendous work cataloguing a variety of challenging and obscure material in a wide gamut of languages.

Roger Parsons has continued to do sterling work cataloguing our main book sequence.

Laura Morris-Kingham completed her placement from Sussex University working on our photographic collections. Her work has meant that only one box of previously uncatalogued

photographs remains to be sorted, comprising about 10 small collections. Thus, having started the project three years ago, we are now at the cusp of seeing all our photographs fully sorted and catalogued.

Aaditya Sathish undertook an internship with us from the College of the Atlantic, USA. He was working on the Papers of Edward William West and exploring the wider field of West's interest in Zoroastrianism. During his time with us he made significant progress on listing, sorting, cleaning and packaging the material, which will be continued in the coming weeks by the Archivist.

Tiyasha Dutta Paul has commenced volunteering with us this September and is currently working on an audit of all our Collections material on display throughout the premises. After auditing, she will update the labels for the items and produce catalogue entries for those currently uncatalogued.

In October 2018 we will again host an Alphawood Scholarship Intern. Praphaphan Chuenkaek will work on our large Quaritch Wales collection, aiming to get his Papers on to the online catalogue.

Our NADFAS volunteers have continued to visit to carry out book repairs.

Palm Leaf Manuscript digitization project

The Palm Leaf Manuscript project has proceeded apace. Over 100 manuscripts from the Whish Collection have now been completely digitized and are viewable online all around the world on the Internet Archive. We have also put 35 of these manuscripts on our Digital Library. When the project is finished, we will put the rest of them on our Digital Library, as well.

We have received a positive response to the project on social media. However, the significance of the project warrants further publicity, and we will look for further opportunities to raise the profile of this initiative.

Other digitization projects

Professor Almut Hintze offered to help with the digitization of the E.W. West papers, and a large portion of the West collection has since been digitized by scholars working as part of the ERC project, *Multimedia Yasna*. We hope to be able to put these images on the Digital Library in due course.

A selection of our Peppe Papers was digitized in connection with a forthcoming exhibition.

Conservation

Mathilde Renaud did an excellent job of conserving a pilgrimage scroll from the RAS Collection for her final-year project as part of her Conservation MA at Camberwell College of Arts. The item has since returned to the Society.

We were prompted to revive the initiative to restore the *sazigyo* binding for our manuscript, RAS Burmese 86, and will look into ways to take this forward.

Reprographic services

There were 2692 images taken from RAS collections between April and August, including 60 by library staff, for which we charged £215.

Visits and conferences

The Library welcomed a delegation from the National Archives of Malaysia, including the Director General, to see our Malay manuscripts. We also welcomed Lord Green, Chairman of Asia House, to see some treasures from the RAS Collection.

We welcomed visits from the Friends of the Museum of London, as well as visits by professional staff from the Oxford Centre of Islamic Studies, Royal United Services Institute, the Poetry School, and the London Library.

The Librarian and Archivist were asked to inspect a manuscript, in relation to a grant request from another institution.

The Librarian was invited to lecture at the Oxford Centre of Islamic Studies, and is delivering a talk in October on the subject of “Systems of Religion and Morality in the Collections of the Royal Asiatic Society.”

Loans to exhibitions

The objects on loan to the Science Museum exhibition *Illuminating India* returned to the Society in late April.

The National Library Board of Singapore asked to borrow Raffles Java 4 for a forthcoming exhibition.

Loans to the RAS

We made all the necessary arrangements for the loan of the Arrow Vase from the Horniman Museum to proceed as planned in September 2018. A lecture in connection with the loan, by Rose Kerr, was also arranged.

The loan of the banner on the Chinese Labour Corps from the “British Lions, Chinese Dragons” exhibition proceeded as planned between 22 May and 18 June. A talk by Frances Wood and John De Lucy was held in connection with the exhibition.

Edward Weech
Librarian