

## **LIBRARY REPORT**

**For the period September to December 2018**

### **Digital Library**

During 2018, the Digital Library received over 20,000 page views from 4,000 visitors. Just over half of the visitors were from the UK, North America, and France, with another 8% from India, and 6% from Malaysia and Indonesia. The most popular collections were the Manning Archive, Malay manuscripts, the Gulistan, the Juki, and our film of the Nineveh archaeological excavation.

While the levels of use are encouraging, we would like to see the site more heavily used, and as such we need to continue to add material to the Digital Library over the coming year. The next large addition will be the rest of the South Indian Sanskrit palm leaf manuscripts, due to be added during the Spring.

The Librarian delivered a talk about the Digital Library and the Society's digital strategy at the conference of the National Committee for Information Resources on Asia (NACIRA), held at Asia House on 3 December.

### **Thomas Manning Archive**

The Winter 2018 edition of the *Coleridge Bulletin* contained a paper based on the Librarian's lecture on Manning to the Friends of Coleridge conference in August.

The Manning Archive was the most-consulted collection on the Digital Library.

### **RAS Archives**

The end of 2018 saw more additions to the Archives Hub catalogue, of Institutional archives, Personal Papers, and also our first Special Collections catalogue. They are:

- Royal Asiatic Society Collections Acquisition Records
- Royal Asiatic Society Collections Disposal Records
- Papers of Edward Rehatsek
- Papers of Captain James Purefoy
- Chinese Documents on Trade Regulations

The last catalogue was possible due to the work of volunteer, Fu Yang, who gave many hours to translating these documents into modern Chinese and then providing abstracts in English

to enable the archivist to catalogue them. A page about the documents will appear on the website shortly. We are pleased to announce that during her time with us Fu Yang successfully completed her doctorate at SOAS, as has also a previous volunteer, Amy Matthewson.

The photograph collections of the Society are now almost all repackaged and catalogued, marking the end of a three year project. There are two sets which we have kept aside as suitable future intern projects. In 2019 we hope to move on to sorting and cataloguing the glass slides in the collections.

The Archivist has continued to sort and work with both Personal Papers and Institutional Archives. The Papers of E.W. West are now all cleaned and correctly packaged. Work with the records connected to our Collections continues.

The Archivist attended the recent Group for Literary Archives and Manuscripts event at the Poetry Library, Royal Festival Hall, and was able to highlight the Society's acquisition of the A.C. Graham Papers, which contain archives of literary interest.

Our Twitter followers now number 6202, and we have 640 people subscribed to the blog, as of 14 December 2018.

Nancy Charley

### **Library Management System**

Our catalogue data was migrated to Koha in early November. We stopped using our old catalogue, Liberty, at that time, adding new catalogue records only in Koha. We updated our public catalogue links to direct to Koha before the Christmas holidays. An announcement about the new catalogue will be made via the Society's blog in January 2019.

### **Donations/Acquisitions**

The A.C. Graham Archive has been sorted according to the pre-accession list, in preparation for full cataloguing. In order to store the ca. 4000 books in the second floor office, we need to erect suitable shelving once the Palm Leaf Manuscript digitization project has finished in mid-2019.

We accepted one small box of photographic slides depicting Baghdad and the Marsh Arabs of Iraq, dating from the 1980s. They were taken by a British man who was at that time working on a new hospital in Baghdad, and were donated by his family.

Professor Robinson forwarded the donation of the official report of Captain Walter E. Cross on the Lohit Valley Reconnaissance, of 1941-42, which was printed in 1944. It comes to the Society by way of a friend of the family.

We received several dozen books of Asiatic travel writing and art, donated by Vanessa Harley.

We are investigating the feasibility of a subscription to the new, third edition of the Encyclopedia of Islam, either in print or online (or both), to complement the second edition that is presently in the Reading Room.

### **Brotherton Library**

Following the recent interest in the ex-RAS Collection of Chinese books at the Brotherton Library, there are hopes of a new cataloguing initiative.

### **Users and enquiries**

The library received 55 visits from researchers between September and December, down from 77 for the same period last year. However, the total number of visitors for the year was up, from 189 in 2017 to 233 – the same number as in 2016. We replied to 111 remote enquiries between September and December, compared to 110 for the same period in 2017. The total number of enquiries in 2018 was 350, up from 319 in 2017.

The collections which generated the most enquiries were RAS Archives, Indian art, Persian manuscripts, the Tod Collection, and Malay manuscripts.

### **Cataloguing**

We added 565 records to the online catalogue between September and December. This includes records for all our Malay manuscripts, as well as a large number of books. The Librarian has resumed the cataloguing of the “Tracts” collection, which comprises 200 bound volumes of C19th pamphlets and offprints, including many rare and inscribed copies.

### **Volunteers**

Our volunteers and interns continue to give many hours of service. Ian Scholey has completed listing and repackaging the extensive collections of slides donated by Barbara Ingham. He has now moved on to listing and packaging the recent donation of a set of slides, comprising photos of Iraq and the Marsh Arabs in the 1980s.

Tiyasha Dutta Paul has completed an audit of our works of art on display. All now have descriptive labels and are described on the online catalogue. She is completing the project by producing information leaflets for visitors to discover more about the items on display.

Thomas O'Connor completed some of the listing for the Burton Memorial Medal which will enable the archivist to complete the catalogue in the coming year.

Praphaphan Chuenkaek completed her Alphawood Scholarship Internship. She made excellent progress with the Papers of Horace Geoffrey Quaritch Wales, completing the list, making many entries into the Archives Hub catalogue and repackaging the pottery fragments that make up part of the Collection. The archivist is currently completing this project and it is hoped that the extensive catalogue will become available in January 2019.

Roger Parsons is now proficient in the use of our new Library Management System, Koha, and has continued with the cataloguing of our main book sequence, which is almost finished.

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

We held a lunch in December to thank all those who have volunteered with the Society over the past year.

### **Palm Leaf Manuscript digitization project**

The photography of the Whish/South Indian Sanskrit collection is almost completed, and will finish in early 2019. The intention is to move on to the Burmese manuscripts, and then to the Sinhalese and Tamil manuscripts. We may have up to 400 palm leaf manuscripts fully photographed and viewable online by the end of the project.

It would be good to generate more publicity around this important and novel initiative.

We aspire to holding a public event to mark the end of the project in the latter part of 2019.

### **Other digitization projects**

Art UK have offered to photograph the Society's sculpture collection as part of their ongoing project to digitally capture and promote sculpture collections in public heritage institutions. This continues the Public Catalogue Foundation project on oil paintings, which the Society participated in several years ago. We have provisionally agreed to provide access to the building to photograph the sculptures in early 2019. The images will go online on the Art UK website, but we will receive copies of all images and will retain copyright.

We would like to acquire a simple desktop scanner in order to begin the digitization of our photographic collections.

### **Conservation**

We received a new quote for the conservation of RAS Burmese 86 and for the accompanying *sazigyo* braid. We should have a deadline in mind for the renewed fundraising campaign. A

portion of the conservation cost can be met using the legacy funding from private donors from the previous fundraising drive.

We might consider other objects in the Burmese collections as candidates for conservation in the run-up to the Society's bicentenary in 2023.

Mathilde Renaud and Laurent Cruveillier, graduates of the Camberwell MA programme, will deliver talks on their past work with RAS collections at the next Open Evening, on Tuesday 26 March.

### **Reprographic services**

There were 1055 images taken from RAS collections between September and December, including 370 by library staff, for which we charged £415.

### **Visits and conferences**

We welcomed a visit from Yale University Press to see the Tod Collection, in connection with the forthcoming new edition of Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*. We also received two group visits of students from the Courtauld Institute to see Persian manuscripts, as well as students from Camberwell College of Arts, looking for objects to use as part of their final-year conservation projects.

The Society hosted a meeting of the China Library Group, and was also used as a venue for a seminar by the Charles Lamb Society, building on the recent activity around the Thomas Manning Archive.

In October, the Librarian delivered a lecture at the Oxford Centre of Islamic Studies, titled "Systems of Religion and Morality in the Collections of the Royal Asiatic Society". A revised version of the lecture will be presented at the Society in June, 2019. The Librarian also delivered a talk on digitization at the NACIRA conference at Asia House in December.

### **Loans to exhibitions**

Raffles Java 4 is going on loan to the National Library Board of Singapore on 21 January.

### **Loans to the RAS**

Dr Rose Kerr delivered a lecture in September in conjunction with the Arrow Vase loan. The loan period has now been extended until the end of March, 2019. The Horniman Museum posted a guest blog by the Librarian to commemorate the loan and the links between our two institutions.

In November, the Society received the Hoppisley Collection of Chinese classics on long-term loan from the London Library. Cataloguing will commence in the New Year. We announced the loan in a post on our blog.

Edward Weech  
Librarian