

## **LIBRARY REPORT**

**For the period April to August 2019**

### **Digital Library**

The Digital Library received 2,172 visits from 1,632 users between April and August, with over 10,000 page views. Just over half of the traffic came from the UK, USA, India, and Malaysia. A further 5% of our traffic came from Nepal. Once again, the most popular collections were the Malay manuscripts, Manning archive, and Hodgson drawings, but we also saw interest in the Whish Collection palm leaf manuscripts, and the Gulistan and Juki (RAS Persian 258 and 239).

We added 89 images from several of our photographic collections, making use of the new RAS scanner. The photos depict historical scenes from India as well as images of famous Orientalists from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

### **Thomas Manning Archive**

In June, the Librarian delivered a paper based on the Manning Archive at the conference *Crossing Borders: Sinology in Translation Studies*, organized by the Department of Translation and Research Centre for Translation, at the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

The paper on Thomas Manning which the Librarian delivered in April 2018 at the conference *Exiles, Emigres and Expatriates in Romantic-era Paris and London*, at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, was recently published in a special issue of *Litteraria Pragensia*.

### **RAS Archives**

Progress has continued with the sorting and cataloguing of archives. Thirty new catalogues have been added to Archives Hub including those for the first five properties associated with the Society and those for the major anniversaries (100, 150, 160, 175) celebrated by the Society. Other catalogues include some for Committee minutes, for royal patronage and for the Society's interaction with the International Union of Orientalists, as well as several small sets of personal papers and special collections. The papers for George Edward Fryer have also been cleaned, identified and repackaged.

Alongside this, progress has also been made with records management. Retention schedules have been drafted for General Finance, Governance, Membership and Property, and the archivist has been working with the Executive Officer to begin sorting both current and historic records within the remits set out by the schedules. This has a dual purpose of both ensuring the records we are keeping are in line with the new GDPR requirements, and that those of archival value will be maintained for the future. The purchase of a new efficient shredder has made appropriate disposal of records a much easier process.

The issues with the blog now seem to be resolved and messages for new blogposts are being sent. The numbers receiving it are uncertain, as though recorded at 1584 this includes some dubious email addresses added at the end of 2018 that are being removed from the list. The number of Twitter followers continues to rise and reached 6900 by the beginning of September.

Nancy Charley

## **Shelving**

We arranged for shelving to house the A.C. Graham Library to be installed in the second-floor office at the beginning of September.

## **Chinese Collections/University of Leeds**

The cataloguing of the Hippisley Collection was completed during the summer. We subsequently received a request from the International Sinology Research Center of Shandong University to re-catalogue this material according to Chinese rare book specifications.

We received confirmation from the Brotherton Library that they have agreed plans for the preparation of a detailed catalogue of the ex-RAS Collection of Chinese books.

Staff at the Brotherton Library are now trying to ascertain whether it is possible to establish which books belonged to Sir George Thomas Staunton. This is in response to an enquiry emanating from an HLF-backed project at Staunton Country Park to promote the legacy of Staunton's career in the local area. Prof. John Hamilton, an RAS Fellow, also visited us to discuss plans for a related exhibition.

## **Users and enquiries**

The library received 102 visits from researchers between April and August, down from 129 in 2018 (2017: 79). We replied to 156 remote enquiries during this period, compared to 159 in 2018 (2017: 135).

The collections which received the most interest were RAS archives, Sir William Jones archive, Raffles papers, Indian art, Chinese art, Persian manuscripts, and Staunton and Tod collections.

## **Acquisitions**

The Society accepted the donation of a portrait of Stuart Simmonds, its former President, which was donated by Prof Simmonds' family. This is now on display in our Lecture Theatre.

### **Cataloguing**

We added 735 records to the online catalogue between April and August (2018: 726). Most of these records are from our oversized books sequence.

### **Volunteers**

We are grateful for the continued help of volunteers and placement students. Ian Scholey continues to list letters in the Register of Correspondence dating from the Society's early years, while Ian Herbertson continues with the audit of our artwork. Yaren Sabah Sahilli, the fourth student placement from the Sussex University MA in History of Art and Museum Curation, added records for our Ottoman manuscripts to the online catalogue.

We have another new volunteer who is appraising and listing the Papers of Dennis Duncanson before cataloguing them onto Archives Hub.

Roger Parsons has continued with the cataloguing of the Society's oversized books. Zhu Liang and Harriet Gemmill completed the cataloguing of the Hippisley Collection. Our NADFAS volunteers have continued with the programme of book repairs.

We agreed to take two Alphawood scholar interns from SOAS, who have just completed their MA degrees in History of Art and Archaeology. Sonetra Seng and Vuthyneath Khut, both from Cambodia, will start their internships in October.

We have penciled in Tuesday 10 December for a volunteer Christmas sandwich lunch at the Society.

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

The Palm Leaf Manuscript digitization project, carried out in partnership with the Internet Archive, finished in late summer. This means that almost 400 manuscripts from the Society's collections were completely digitized and are now freely available to view online from around the world.

We will look into hosting an event to celebrate the completion of the project in late 2019.

### **Other digitization projects**

The National Archives of Malaysia enquired about acquiring digital copies of 24 of our Malay manuscripts. This would include original digitization of 18 manuscripts that have not yet been digitized. The National Archives have indicated they are agreeable to the likely cost and would like to proceed. We are hopeful that a visit from the NAM to the Society in early November, to view the manuscripts and publicize the project, can be arranged.

Following a visit by Jamie Carstairs (University of Bristol Library), we received a request to add a selection of the Society's lantern slides to Prof. Robert Bickers' Historical Photographs of China website, as low-res jpegs. This is a high-profile image database which would mean more exposure for these items. We would retain copyright and requests for reproduction would be referred back to us.

We also received a request to allow photographs of Yezidis from the Society's collection to be included in the new Yezidi Photo Archive, an independent project hosted in Germany. This is a non-commercial site and we would not relinquish copyright. The Palestine Exploration Fund and the Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford, have allowed their photos to be included. It is likely that we have a very small number of photographs that would be suitable for inclusion.

Art UK visited to photograph the Society's sculpture collection in early May.

## **Conservation**

Our efforts to raise funds towards the conservation of RAS Burmese 86 and its *sazigyo* braid were successful, with most of the donations provided by RAS Fellows. The conservation was completed over the summer. We invited backers, volunteers and other supporters of the Society to attend a small celebration to mark the completion of the project, due to take place on 1<sup>st</sup> October.

The Camberwell MA projects to conserve items from the Society's collections were completed successfully. The students concerned have agreed to speak about their experiences at our next Collections Open Evening on 17 March 2020.

## **Reprographic services**

There were 868 digital images taken from RAS collections between April and August, 285 of which were made by library staff. We also provided 50 photocopies. In total, we charged £562 for these services.

## **Visits and conferences**

Between April and August, the Library welcomed a number of group visits to see the collections in our Reading Room. This included groups from SOAS, the TECHNE doctoral researchers group, the London Members Group, and participants from the Society's Silk Road course. We also welcomed the Maharaja of Jodhpur to see items from the Tod Collection, as part of the preparations for the new edition of Tod's *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*.

### **Loans to exhibitions**

Raffles Java 7 has been loaned to the British Museum for the exhibition, "Sir Stamford Raffles: collecting in Southeast Asia 1811-1824". The exhibition is scheduled to finish in mid-January.

The Design Museum submitted a request to borrow an Indian astrological manuscript from the Tod Collection as part of their "Moving to Mars" exhibition (which focuses on designing habitats for human life on Mars). The item in question is the Panchanga that was borrowed for the Science Museum exhibition "Illuminating India" in 2017-2018. We agreed that the object could be loaned. It is due to be on loan between 18 October 2019 and 23 February 2020, and will be returned by the end of March.

In connection with both these loans, the Director prepared a new RAS loans agreement.

The loan of the Shipbuilders painting to the Museum of London has been renewed for another year, following a visit and inspection of the painting.

### **Journal exchanges**

We received a request from the Indian Numismatic Historical & Cultural Research Foundation to set up an exchange with JRAS, in return for their publication, Numismatic Digest.

Edward Weech  
Librarian