

VISIT TO SOAS LIBRARY

I visited The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Library at the invitation of the Librarian, Miss Barbara Burton. She had set up special meetings also with Helen Marriott, who is responsible for Southeast Asian materials, with Brian Hickman for Japanese materials, and with Charles d'Orban for the Chinese materials.

SOAS Library houses one of the most significant collections on Asia in Britain, especially in relation to current vernacular Asian language collections.

Miss Burton provided an overview of the Library's collecting policy and catalogue access to the collection. She also described the rising and falling nature of the funding, which is on an upswing at the moment with a special one-off grant as a result of the recent review of Asian Studies at tertiary institutions carried out by Sir Peter Parker.

SOAS is not currently using computer cataloguing. It has a published catalogue to the late 70s with a new titles card catalogue and a name catalogue. They are considering automation with the "Libertas" system.

The Japanese and Korean collection is headed by Brian Hickman, who has charge of about 8,000 Korean volumes, 75,000 Japanese volumes and a joint serial collection of 400 current titles and 650 ceased titles. The books are classified by Dewey 8th ed. for Japanese and a version of Dewey for Korean books. There is a Professor of Korean at SOAS who helps with book selection.

Charles d'Orban takes care of the Chinese collection with only one other staff members. He acquires about 3,000 Chinese monographs a year from China National Publishing Industry Trading Corporation. He does individual selection from their current lists. They put out a China Serials list of 150 pages; this company charges twice the advertised Chinese price plus postage.

The Chinese collection is heavily patronised by scholars and also by students from the People's Republic of China in London for recreational and academic use. The most heavily used sections are economics and statistics.

The Section buys little or nothing from Hong Kong as the British Library gets Hong Kong publications on copyright deposit and their library is so close. Little also is acquired from Taiwan, as their publications stay in print longer; SOAS can afford to wait and pick them up later. The Chinese acquisitions are less than one third than those of National Library of Australia and the Staatsbibliothek in Berlin.

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