

The Asian Library at Leiden University introduced at ICAS (Adelaide)

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A highlight of my attendance at ICAS 9 (International Convention of Asian Scholars), the biannual international gathering for Asian studies scholars held in Adelaide in 2015, was meeting Kurt De Belder, who is University Librarian and Director of Leiden University Libraries & Leiden University Press. Kurt De Belder attended ICAS in order to publicise Leiden's plans and promote his vision for 'The Asian Library at Leiden University' as 'a major international knowledge hub on Asia' for scholars, students and visitors.

In 2014, Leiden University Library took over responsibility for the Asian collections of a number of significant institutions when these were threatened with closure. These were the collections of KITLV (the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies), which is considered the most important collection on Indonesia worldwide, the colonial collection of the former Library of the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT), and the Kern Institute Library. These collections, together with Leiden's existing very strong collections on Southeast Asia, China, Japan and Korea, will be brought together to form Leiden's Asian Library. A whole new floor is to be built on top of the existing Leiden University Library in order to house the collections. The Asian Library will be completed by March 2017 and will include 'state-of-the-art facilities' and a fellowship program for scholars.

Plans for the Asian Library at Leiden also include intensive digitization programs, the creation of a 'born-digital' collection and 'an endowed and named curatorship' for its digital collections. Together with external partners, the Asian Library intends to undertake a massive program of digitization of Indonesian materials in order to create an *Indonesian Digital Library*.

At a time of increasing rationalization and de-prioritization of Asian collections and Asian library expertise worldwide, I was very impressed and excited to hear about Leiden University Library's plans and I applaud Kurt's grand vision for the Asian Library at Leiden. I was no less impressed that Kurt sat in a booth in the publishers and vendors' area for the entire duration of the convention and was happy to talk to anyone who approached him. This in itself demonstrated a significant commitment and investment in Asian studies by the head of a major university library no less!