

**ASIAN COLLECTIONS IN EUROPE :  
A VISIT TO THE NETHERLANDS AND UNITED KINGDOM  
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The main purpose of my one week European visit was to present a paper on Australian experiences at the "International Workshop: Developments in the Co-ordination of Asian Collections" held in Amsterdam on 15 April, organised by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS). IIAS generously sponsored the attendance of several foreign speakers, including myself. I also visited major Asian collections in Leiden and London. All the people I met in both countries were extremely kind and helpful.

**LEIDEN, MONDAY 14 APRIL**

Together with Mr Hao Shouzheng of the National Library of China, who was also representing his country at the workshop the following day, I made a one day visit to the university town of Leiden, south of Amsterdam, which is the major centre for Asian studies in the Netherlands. Mr Hao had spent three months at the Australian National University (ANU) in 1995, had visited the National Library of Australia, and had a highly positive impression of Australia.

**University of Leiden Oriental Department Library**

The strength of the collection lies in old and rare manuscripts and books from Southeast Asia, particularly Indonesia, as well as South Asia and the Middle East. There are also some historical Chinese and Japanese materials, though collecting is now left to the University's Sinological Institute Library. The Library holds part of the famous von Siebold (1796-1866) collection on Japan prior to its opening to the West in the mid nineteenth century. The stacks are closed to readers.

**Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology**

The National Library has for many years cooperated with the Royal Institute of Linguistics and Anthropology (Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde - KITLV)'s acquisition operation in Indonesia. KITLV collects a narrower range of subjects from Indonesia than the National Library, based particularly on their interest in linguistics and anthropology. The National Library receives KITLV's microfiche of Indonesian materials. The Chief Librarian of KITLV, Dr Roger Tol, is known to a number of staff of NLA. He is clearly a leading figure in Asian librarianship in the Netherlands, and chaired the workshop in Amsterdam the following day. He explained that the library is the major focus of the KITLV, which also carries out publishing and other scholarly activities.

KITLV holds the major Indonesian collection in the Netherlands, with strong historical and contemporary collections. There is cooperation between the three main Indonesian collections in the Netherlands, the KITLV, the University of Leiden and the Tropical Institute in Amsterdam. KITLV also collects from other areas which are former Dutch colonies, such as Surinam. A recent development has been the establishment of a Malaysian collection and reading room with the materials supplied by Malaysia. The main KITLV reading room is of moderate size, with computer catalogues, and appeared to be in heavy use.

### **University of Leiden Sinological Institute Library**

The Sinological Institute houses the only developing Chinese collection in the Netherlands. It is widely used not only by Dutch researchers but by readers from other European countries including Germany, France, Italy and the United Kingdom. It also holds Western and Japanese language publications about China, in separate sequences. The collection is roughly similar in size to NLA's, with 270,000 volumes of Chinese books and 4,000 serial titles. However there is a considerable historical focus. It includes the rare and famous van Gulik collection on traditional Chinese (and Japanese) literature, music and other topics (part of which is held on microfiche by NLA), a rare collection of local publications from Fukien province, and a number of rare dictionaries. The stacks are closed.

The Librarian, Joyce Wu, showed great interest in the National CJK Service (NCJKS), as her library does not yet have CJK script automation. She had met Linda Groom, former NCJKS Manager, in China. The Institute has major cataloguing backlogs, but has a project to catalogue 50,000 titles over three years with an additional four staff. Currently many titles have only a title slip in the card catalogues. The card catalogues are in Wade-Giles romanisation but in the romanised online catalogue Pinyin is used. As with NLA's East Asian collections, the Institute uses the Harvard-Yenching Classification, and has similar difficulties with new subjects not covered by the scheme. The library has severe space problems, but is in the process of moving material to a new floor built on top of the beautiful old building in which the Institute is housed.

### **University of Leiden Centre for Japanese and Korean Studies Library**

The smaller Japanese and Korean collection is housed on the floor above the Sinological Institute Library.

The Assistant Librarian who deals with Japanese, Paul Wijsman, gave a tour. I also met Mr Olof, who manages the Korean collection. There are around 20,000 Japanese and 8,000 Korean items, considerably smaller than NLA's holdings. Most publications are purchased, but as the library is collecting broadly across many subjects only a few items are bought for each subject in any one year. Because of space problems, although the books are classified they are shelved by accession number.

## **International Workshop on Asian Collections, Amsterdam, 15 April**

A one day international workshop was held at the Free University in Amsterdam, attended by 30 Dutch and foreign participants. The Indian and Thai representatives were prevented from attending by an air traffic controllers' strike in India, which greatly disrupted flights to Europe and also considerably delayed my own arrival in the Netherlands.

The workshop was organised by the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), whose head, Professor Stokhof, opened proceedings. He explained that IIAS had four main aims : providing fellowships for young researchers; publishing an international newsletter (also on the Internet); establishing a joint European forum for Asian studies; and organising a number of workshops and conferences on Asian studies. This Asian Collections Workshop was aimed at more sophisticated cooperation in the Netherlands and internationally. Clearly from his remarks and those of others at the workshop, the IIAS has a high profile and is able to attract support for playing a strong role in Europe on Asian studies matters.

### Australia

The morning was devoted to presentations by the foreign representatives. The first was my paper on Australian experiences with coordinating Asian collections. There was considerable interest in Australia, which was seen as a model for cooperation. It was gratifying that a number of Dutch and other participants were already quite familiar with developments from NLA's home pages for Asian collections and Distributed National Collection (DNC) activities, ANU sites and the Asialib discussion list. The Dutch librarians were particularly interested in the way the Roundtables on Libraries and Asia had led to more focused work on priority areas such as Korea and South Asia, and also the involvement of users in the cooperative process.

### United States

Mrs Helen Poe, who has been Chief of the Asian Division at the Library of Congress since 1994, described the quite complex situation in the United States. The tendency there had been to postpone cooperation as long as funds continued to be available. However there is now good cooperation between the Library of Congress through its field officers stationed in various parts of Asia with the relevant committees of the main user group, the Association for Asian Studies. Much of the collaboration in the United States covers only part of the country. For example, for South Asia there are committees covering the west coast, mid-west and eastern states.

### United Kingdom

Mr Derek Sawyer, Head of Acquisitions at the British Library's Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC) described the history of cooperation in the United Kingdom. Regional library groups for South Asia, Southeast Asia, China, Japan and Korea were now part of the National Council of

Orientalist Library Resources. The regional groups of academics and librarians had shared information but made little progress on coordination. An exception was the Japan Library Group which from 1975 pioneered a cooperative acquisitions scheme with shared funding. The four collecting institutions met regularly to ensure significant publications were acquired and duplication avoided. However the scheme effectively ended in the early 1990s when Japan Foundation funding on which it largely depended was withdrawn.

There are currently *ad hoc* arrangements, for example between the School of Oriental and African Studies Library and OIOC, but there is no national strategy for Asian collections. Cut-backs in the last decade have caused libraries to turn inwards. The British Library believed cooperation was essential but would have more chance of success on a European Community-wide, rather than national basis.

### Germany

Dr George Baumann, Library Director and Head, Oriental Department, Tübingen University, described the coordinated system which has operated in Germany for nearly 70 years. Government funds are currently provided to 80 libraries to acquire materials in designated areas of excellence. For example, Tübingen University Library covers the Middle East and South Asia. These centres are then expected to meet loan requests or seek to acquire the items not held. Special funding must be applied for annually for expensive items. To date, the scheme has worked well for acquisitions, with an annual funding increase of 2 to 5 percent. However, some problems have arisen with new fields of study not covered by the scheme; when a library does not meet its commitment to collecting; with staffing which is a state government responsibility; and recently with centres in the former East Germany seeking to have the responsibility for certain subjects transferred to them

### Netherlands

Dr Wessels of Bureau Jupiter at the Royal Library described the coordinated system for collecting scientific periodicals in the Netherlands. Libraries belonging to the Jupiter scheme have certain core and non-core titles, and may cancel the latter after consultation. They have reduced duplication from 25 percent in 1980 to 5 percent in 1995.

Dr Trix Bakker, cooperative collection development coordinator at the Royal Library, provided an historical summary of resource sharing in the Netherlands. The Dutch automated cataloguing system, PICA, began in 1969. Since the 1970s Dutch libraries have experienced declining purchasing power, and were acquiring 30-50 percent fewer volumes in 1990 than a decade earlier, making cooperation more vital. Collecting activities are being mapped and since 1993 eight out of ten major academic libraries have described their strengths and collecting intentions using *Conspectus* based on the Dutch classification scheme. Also in 1993 a PICA file was set up for

libraries to indicate an intention to cancel periodicals, so that unique titles would be retained or transferred. Since 1995 a research project has looked at the coverage of foreign academic publications in Dutch libraries, revealing some gaps. Currently Dutch libraries are cooperating with libraries in several countries to streamline electronic information in Europe.

### Roundtable Discussion

The final part of the workshop consisted of general discussion and some recommendations. It was agreed that further meetings were needed on these matters, possibly in conjunction with other events. Professor Stokhof had already mentioned a proposed cooperative meeting of Asian and European librarians in Singapore in September 1998, which he said should include Australia.

It was agreed that the presentations and outcomes of the workshop should be published in a special supplement to the IAS Newsletter in August 1997. They will then also appear on the IAS website. Prior to this, my paper will be added to NLA's server.

As a practical step within the Netherlands it was agreed that there be a study of who is collecting which periodicals on Asia. The IAS website was accepted as a good place for communication including for listing duplicates.

It was seen as important that for cooperation Dutch libraries all needed to be using one database. At present some important collections, such as the Tropical Institute, are not PICA members.

There was discussion of the problem of uncatalogued retrospective materials, and the need to prepare a guide to the various special collections on Asia held in Dutch libraries, which are uncatalogued or poorly covered in catalogues.

While it was agreed that the IAS must be one of the leaders in national cooperation, there was discussion on whether this should be together with the Royal Dutch Library or a wider group including users. Some saw the Royal Library as being primarily concerned with Dutch publications and not particularly involved with Asian collections.

There was considerable interest in whether to concentrate on national coordination or more broadly within Europe and internationally. This included discussion of the possibility of setting up European acquisition offices in Asia or joining Library of Congress (LC) programs if LC is prepared to operate on an international basis. The British Library favoured a European Union feasibility study on coordination within Europe involving key institutions. The German representative cautioned that practical problems such as the lack of common cataloguing standards in Europe and the issue of language would have to be overcome.

## **VISITS TO LONDON LIBRARIES, 17-18 APRIL**

### **University of London School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Library**

The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Library's mission statement includes its role as a leading national and international resource of publications, archives and other related materials on Asia and Africa in the humanities and social sciences. There are seven regional collections: Africa, Ancient Near East, Islamic Near and Middle East, China, Japan/Korea, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Many Asian languages are represented. The Chinese, Japanese and Southeast Asian collections are substantial. Currently SOAS holds over 850,000 volumes, with 19,000 monographs added to the collection annually, and subscriptions to 4,400 current serial titles. In 1996/97 the book and serial budget was £414,500. The many archival collections include missionary archives, business, administrative and diplomatic papers. Holdings include the London Missionary Society (LMS) archives, while the National Library of Australia houses the Chinese language book component of the LMS collection. Apparently a number of readers have shown interest in the LMS books in Australia.

The Librarian, Ms Mary Auckland, and her staff were very hospitable. The China and East Asia librarian, Ms Sue Small, and the Japan and Korea librarian, Ms Fujiko Kobayashi, were most interested in Australian developments, especially the NCJKS, and NLA's use of RLIN records for the CJK system.

SOAS, like other European libraries visited, has a traditional arrangement of physically separated small regional collection reading rooms each manned by one or a few staff. The SOAS Library is housed in a substantial building from the early 1970s, which is showing signs of heavy use, including by many readers from the Asian and African communities as well as undergraduates and researchers.

### **British Library Oriental and India Office Collections**

Oriental and India Office Collections (OIOC), which since the early 1990s has combined the formerly separate Oriental Collections and the India Office Library, is housed in a 1960s building in Blackfriars Road close to Waterloo Station. OIOC is due to move to the British Library's new St Pancras site within the next twelve months. However as the St Pancras building is only a Stage One development, OIOC will actually have less space than at present, and will have to "outhouse" materials.

OIOC has extensive historical collections of printed works and manuscripts, including the vast India Office records, which are claimed by the Indian Government. OIOC's definition of "Oriental" is very wide, stretching from Morocco to the Pacific. Although the OIOC is building on its historical collections with contemporary materials, clearly it cannot meet the ideal of

obtaining all significant publications in the social sciences and humanities. There is some cooperation on collecting with SOAS.

Although extremely busy with a British Library Board meeting at OIOC the day I visited, Graham Shaw, who heads OIOC, and his staff were all most helpful.

East Asian collections staff, including Yu-Ying Brown, Head of the Japanese Collections (who has visited Australia), Hamish Todd, Japanese Section and Dr Susan Whitfield, Chinese Section were very interested in the NCJKS. Hamish Todd demonstrated BL's use of the Japanese NACSIS system, which is used to add romanised records to the automated system used for East Asian materials by the major British collections. However, because of the time difference with Japan, NACSIS is only accessible for two to three hours per day.

Dr Whitfield deals with the International Dunhuang Project which is digitising rare and ancient Chinese materials from the Dunhuang caves and other sites on the Silk Route, which are now held in the UK, France, Russia and China itself. She mentioned that the successful involvement of Russia was almost unique at present in terms of cooperative projects with that country.

I also met Patricia Herbert, Curator, Southeast Asian Collections, who has had considerable contacts with Australia, and Annabel Teh Gallop, Curator for Indonesian and Malay. The latter made it clear that OIOC's collecting of current materials from Indonesia and Malaysia is quite limited, and a large part of her work involves preparing major exhibitions of historical holdings.

## Conclusions

While this was quite a brief visit to the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, it was most useful for making and renewing National Library of Australia contacts with European and other international colleagues, publicising Australia's considerable progress in Asian collections and their coordination, and learning more about developments in Europe.

From the reports by representatives at the Amsterdam workshop, Australia seems to be well advanced in Asian collection coordination compared with the other participants. An exception is Germany which has enjoyed a highly developed government-funded system of library cooperation for many years.

A number of Dutch librarians, and in particular the British Library representative, urged that cooperation be European and international rather than national in focus. This may be more useful, for example, as there is only one active Chinese research collection in the Netherlands.

The visits to libraries in Leiden and London were valuable for gaining a better understanding of their situation and making useful contacts. In contrast with NLA's Asian collections, the institutions visited had strongly historical collections, largely based on the colonial experience, and while some were building modern collections they were weaker on contemporary Asia than the National Library of Australia. The Asian collections and services visited were generally organised in a traditional way, with a number of small, separated reading rooms each staffed by a one or two people. None of the libraries visited had automated systems for Asian scripts as advanced as the National CJK Service, which was of considerable interest to them.

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Andrew's paper "Australian Experiences with Co-ordinating Asian Collections: Issues and Achievements", which was presented at the International Workshop on Developments in the Co-ordination of Asian Collections held at the Free University in Amsterdam on 15 April 1997 and sponsored by the International Institute for Asian Studies, is now at:

<http://www.nla.gov.au/nla/staffpaper/agosling2.html>

