

India Office Records at the British Library: digitisation activity and plans

India and South Asia are government priorities for engagement and cultural diplomacy. South Asia's increasing global significance fuels international interest in the region, and the countries themselves have ambitious plans to improve and extend education, which suggests that the British Library's South Asia collections -- the richest and most extensive outside the sub-continent -- will be increasingly important to them. The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the British Library and the Indian Ministry of Culture in 2010 was an essential first step towards greater collaboration between the Library and institutions in India, which has been followed by significant progress. Key priorities include:

- Continue to develop strategic partnerships in India and elsewhere to share knowledge, prioritise work, and secure greater access to and engagement with the collections by a range of audiences in South Asia and the UK
- Make collections freely accessible online, so that they are available to anyone anywhere
- Engage with a range of audiences

The India Office Records contain some of the richest and most comprehensive documents for the history of science in undivided India during the British colonial period. Although created mainly by the British administrators and designed for official use, they reflect a diversity of opinion and give insights into Indian as well as European understanding and practices.

The Library is keen to make these holdings more accessible and better known. To this end, the following projects have been undertaken:

In 2003 an AHRC research-enhancement grant was awarded to British Library and SOAS to identify sources for science and environment in the India Office Records (£280,572: award holder David Arnold). This resulted in a British Library publication, *Science and the Changing Environment in India, 1780-1920: a guide to sources in the India Office Records*.

In 2011, sources in the Guide relating to Calcutta Botanic Garden were digitised for *Wallich and Indian Natural History*, a project funded by the World Collections Programme (£248,090: a partnership between the British Library, the Natural History Museum and Kew Gardens) to map and digitise sources relating to Nathaniel Wallich, Supervisor of CBG 1817-46. See www.kew.org/wallich (IOR contribution under 'Correspondence').

This year, sources in the Guide relating to other botanic gardens in India, and to botanical exploration generally, have been digitised for *Botany in British India*, a project funded by the AHRC under its Digital Transformations in Arts and Humanities Theme (£56,760: award holder Antonia Moon). Over 100 files are now available on the Library's web site. See <http://bit.ly/RbQ54c>

As a result of these initiatives, most of the manuscript material relating to botany in the India Office Records between 1780 and 1850 has now been identified, catalogued,

and digitised. Catalogue records and digitised images are all on-line, enabling remote users to find material on: botanical gardens (Bangalore, Saharanpur, Dapuri, Ootacamund, Madras, Samulcotta, and Darjeeling); plant-collecting (e.g. expeditions to Assam, the Coromandel Coast, and the Spice Islands); the use of plants as foodstuffs, industrial products, and medicines; botanical pioneers (Nathaniel Wallich, Robert Kyd, William Roxburgh, Hugh Falconer, and William Griffith).

Future plans

With workflows and procedures now well established, we aim to digitise more material identified by the *Guide*, particularly in its chapters on forests, agriculture, meteorology, landscape and topography.

The Library has no core funding for digitisation projects. All projects of the kind described must therefore be externally funded. In any project proposal, we would seek funds for cataloguing (to enhance the brief entries in the Guide and to enter the records on the Library's catalogue system; authority records describing people and places will also increasingly be created), for conservation (to prepare items for digitisation), and for digitisation itself. We welcome ideas for collaborative proposals, especially from institutions such as the National Archives of India which hold material strongly complementary to our own.

In any digitisation project, the catalogue records will be included in the Library's Integrated Archives and Manuscripts catalogue. This means that users will be able to cross-search the whole of the Library's non-book materials for relevant holdings, enabling them to make connections between material that up until now has been described in separate catalogues. In due course, the book and manuscript catalogues will themselves be cross-searchable. In addition, we are currently submitting the Botany in British India and Wallich catalogue records to the European-Commission funded Europeana aggregated catalogue (see <http://www.europeana.eu/portal/aboutus.html>). This will greatly increase discovery of these records, because the Europeana catalogues are Google-searchable.

As an integral part of any project, the Library holds networking events to raise awareness of the resources being made available. We are happy to consider any collaborative proposals for networks related to the holdings described in the *Guide*.

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