

Fiona Williamson (National University of Malaysia and University of East Anglia):
Report on Potential Regional Holdings for Digitisation Project:
Malaysia and Singapore

I have secured agreement from the following organisations to work with us on a pilot digitisation project:

- National Meteorological Services Singapore**
- Forestry Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM)**
- National Archives of Malaysia**

The collection(s) that each institution is prepared to share is detailed below:

Meteorological Services Singapore:

Meteorological Service Singapore are prepared to contribute thermograph logbooks of hourly data starting from 1929. They reside as images in the National Archives of Singapore – see sample image below. However, they will not need any of the project funding obtained. Please also note that Singaporean policy regarding data from Malaysian stations is that it belongs to Malaysia, and the relevant Malaysian authorities must make the decision on its release. I am currently seeking clarification as to the extent of these documents. I am aware that the time period of the documents exceeds that of the current project scope but they could be a valuable inclusion, perhaps in conjunction with the meteorological records contained in the annual Blue Books reports from the nineteenth century as contained in colonial administrative correspondence for the Straits Settlements.

HOURLY VALUES FROM AUTOMATIC RECORDS *January* 1929.

Observatory *Singapore Mount Faber* Readings of the *Thermograph* Unit *1/100*

Standard of Time *105°E* R = 1/10 + 50 + 1 + 2 + - 20

Hour	Wind	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Barom.	Humidity	W. Cloud	
Day 1	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
2	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
3	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
4	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
5	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
6	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
7	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
8	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
9	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
10	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
11	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
12	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
13	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
14	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
15	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
16	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
17	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
18	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
19	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
20	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
21	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
22	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
23	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
24	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
25	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
26	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
27	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
28	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
29	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
30	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
31	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50

Total
Mean
Maximum
Minimum
Barom.
Humidity
W. Cloud

Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM):

FRIM has been operating independently since 1929 but prior to that, the 'FRI' was a Research Branch of the Forest Department. The Research Branch came into existence with the appointment of F. W. Foxworthy as Forest Research Officer in 1918 and the Forest Department itself was established in 1901 with the appointment of A. M. Burn Murdoch (previously an officer in Burma) as Chief Forest Officer on advice from H. C. Hill Inspector-General of Forests to the Government of India. Prior to 1901, the forests in the Straits Settlements were managed by the Directors of Gardens (1883-1889) with a brief period of management by the Land Office. The establishment of the Forest Department resulted in the biggest redirection of forest policy in the history of Straits Settlements and the Federated Malay States (FMS). Thus, despite being rather late in the stipulated timeframe for this project, the period 1880s-1920s is probably the most significant in Malaysian forest history. The history of forestry in Malaysia is relatively new but surprisingly rich and The Library at FRIM have kept and preserved a substantial volume of information on the botanical research undertaken in the country. However, as Malaysian forestry itself only started in early 1900's, much of the documentation available originates from that era. The content of these documents include research progress reports, forest administration and correspondence. However, as Malaya was at that time a British colony; forestry documentation from other colonies are also available in the library. These records have virtually no public presence currently yet are an invaluable resource for researchers interested in forestry, colonial management, intersections between British colonies including Malaya and India, and environmental issues. They also connect with documents at Kew Gardens (see below) and those at the Malaysian National Archives (see below).

FRIM would be very pleased to become part of this project. I have attached the report they have compiled for us detailing some of their key collections.

National Archives of Malaysia:

The Director General and Officer for Reference and Archives are very happy to collaborate with us on a project bid. I have requested that they highlight a collection/series of relevant documents that could be incorporated and need to wait for further details. However my own researches have highlighted a substantial body of documentation relating to the Land Office (responsible for forests before 1901); district offices; and colonial correspondence between Resident and regional state offices. Much of this relates to the natural environment (research and development of rubber, gambier, pepper and coffee, plantations, botanic gardens, forest management and policing) and connects well with the records at FRIM. For instance:

1. criminal proceedings and correspondence records relating to the 'illegal' cutting of timber/burning of charcoal, 'misuse' of forest resources by native inhabitants and immigrants as the colonial administration sought to restrict and manage the use of the land and forests. This led to an interesting conflict over traditional rights and those of the colonial authorities and plantation owners.
2. Botanic and agricultural research. The transfer of seeds and information across the colonies. Experimental plantations and experiments in growing tobacco,

- gutta percha, coconut etc. Reservation of land. Clearing of forest land. Research into the environmental impact of the same.
3. Administrative records relating to forests and botanic gardens, annual reports etc. Management of 'native' and migrant labour: schemes to employ convicts in botanic gardens; working conditions for coolies etc.
 4. Weather: accounts of bad weather/flooding and its impact on local agriculture and villages e.g. severe floods (and droughts) devastated rural areas in 1891,6,7,8, 1901, 1926.

There are also useful journals and gazettes including: Garden's Bulletin Straits Settlements, Penang Gazette.

Many of the records can be connected with (but do not replicate) Colonial Office files held at the British National Archives, Kew and as such, illuminate and add great value to our understanding of nineteenth century Malaysia.

Other:

National Archives of Singapore

They are willing to discuss further. They are currently part of the major project of the Biodiversity Heritage Library: <http://biodivlib.wikispaces.com/BHL+Consortium>

As a member, they are working with Singapore partners to digitise and upload the Singapore collections. See <http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/>

They suggest that they could contribute to more than one digital platform but they would need more information at this stage. However, I would recommend that we pursue this avenue after finding out more information about possible overlaps with the abovementioned projects. They also wish to know whether the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the Natural History Museum (as members of the Biodiversity Heritage Library) will also be contributing their collections to our proposed digital infrastructure?

Kew Botanic Gardens

In conjunction with the above collections, it might be worth approaching the Royal Botanic Gardens Archives at Kew. They have the papers of Henry Ridley (1855-1956), Director of Gardens and Forests for the Straits Settlements from 1888. These papers are not available in Malaysia and would be a very welcome addition for any regional researcher interested in the environmental history of this period when key developments were taking place in developmental forestry, plant and rubber research (including the establishment of botanic gardens in Penang, Kuala Lumpur and Singapore). Ridley's correspondence reveals him as connected to a global network of directors, enthusiasts, and societies in the field of botanical experimentation, exploration, and research. 'Rubber Ridley' as he became known colloquially had been inspired by Joseph Hooker who suggested that he research rubber plants in Sri Lanka whilst on his way to Singapore. Apparently, Ridley was so enthused by what he found that on arrival in Singapore he established an experimental rubber plantation.

According to staff that I spoke to at the archive during June, Ridley's papers were not included in the Andrew Mellon Foundation funded digitization of the Directors' Correspondence (DC) held at Kew but it would be worth double checking as they were not sure whether there were plans afoot to digitize this material in the future.

Extent: 1 box, 3 photographic albums, 49 volumes and 52 folders