

British Library and University of Sussex

2012: MoU signed between British Library, University of Sussex and the Meteorological Office: main purpose to share historical data re climate and environment.

1. Benefits to British Library

Working with Sussex as a key collaborator in the Sussex AHRC-funded network 'Collaborative research on the meteorological and botanical history of the Indian Ocean, 1600-1900', BL has been able to:

- **promote India Office Records and collections in South Asian languages relating to science** to an unusually wide range of audiences, resulting in greater awareness and use of these records
- **establish professional contacts, particularly international contacts**, to whom BL would otherwise have had no access (e.g.: Paramjit Singh, Director of the Botanical Survey of India; Director of Wildlife Institute of India; JNU academics).



Stakeholders in Sussex AHRC network

2. Benefits to University of Sussex

Working with the BL, members of the Centre for World Environmental History at Sussex have been able to:

- **Draw on the expertise of BL staff** in the following areas: professional archive practice; content of IOR and South Asian collections; mapping of archival collections in UK with environmental history content; speakers for network conferences and other events; informal advice on external funding applications involving archives.
- **Develop professional contacts with archivists**, particularly archivists with holdings in environmental history



IOR activities relevant to Sussex

3. Outputs

- 2011-2014: BL participation (speakers; help with programme planning) in the three international conferences organised under the auspices of Sussex AHRC network, 'Botanical and Meteorological History of The Indian Ocean World', and in regular meetings of the network, 2011-14
- 2013: Sussex participation in 'Botany in British India' study day organised by BL as part of AHRC-funded project to digitise India Office records relating to Botany (speakers; sharing of costs; help with programme planning)

- 2014- present: BL participation in planning of road-map of archival sources on environmental history, with a view to selective digitisation; project in development by Sussex as a continuation of its AHRC network grant. BL has also supplied sources gathered from Botany study day.
- VIP South Asian visitors to Sussex regularly include BL in their itinerary (e.g. 2014 visit from Dr Bhojvaid, Director Forest Research Institute Dehra Dun, at which pop-up exhibitions based on complementary BL/Forest Research Institute materials proposed).
- Informal advice from BL to University of Sussex on funding applications based on archive sources. E.g. 'Kew and India' (AHRC, in progress) and 'Snapshots of Empire' (140K Leverhulme grant awarded to Prof. Alan Lester).
- Informal advice from University of Sussex contacts to BL on funding applications relating to South Asia e.g. Prof Deepak Kumar of JNU advised on recent Wellcome Trust award, 'India Office Medical Archives'.
- Strong community of researchers now established, a resource on which both institutions can draw. E.g. BL currently working on a handwriting-recognition tool to apply to digitised botany material; contacts from the wider network have volunteered to help.

Prospects

To discuss at meeting, bearing in mind:

- Increasing preference on part of funding bodies for collaboration
- BL and Sussex mutual interest in digital humanities and application of digital tools