

## Meteorological and Botanical History of the Indian Ocean 1600-1900

### Minutes of Network Steering Committee Meeting, 16/1/14

present; Vinita Damodaran, Rob Iliffe, Alan Lester, Anna Winterbottom, Antonia Moon, Penny Brook, George Adamson, Andy Holyer, Rob Alan (via Skype)

After greetings VD informed the group that the Hooker correspondence project was now online. AW, RI and AH discussed the level of mark-up in the digitised letters, RI and AH advised in favour of a minimal approach, date, location, plant names.

VD and RA discussed the Indian Ocean Data Rescue Workshop to be held in Maputo, Mozambique 21st-23<sup>rd</sup> of April. The question of sending representatives was raised. AM suggested that at least some communiqué is sent outlining the materials held at the BL. RA stressed the value of attendance noting that the workshop provides an opportunity not just to discuss Portuguese archives but to link with others working on the Indian Ocean. Later VD confirmed that she will attend.

In discussion of the aims of the network AL pointed out the primary importance of addressing the commitments made to the AHRC. RI spoke in favour of aiming at a very large project, of building an architecture within which to bring together all the various archives and sources, this 'meta/mega catalogue' should aim to be exhaustive. In the first instance it is suggested that newspaper climate records may form a solid basis from which to begin. AM and PB agreed noting that it is necessary to move beyond simple digitisation in order to convince the wider BL of the value of involvement given that their records are already in the public domain.

GA and VD argued in favour of a number of small projects, after discussion the following are identified as having sufficient potential to be actively pursued;

- GA's project on cyclones in western India, perhaps related -and perhaps leading - to a larger project on Indian Ocean Dipole. (GA and RA meeting separately to discuss such a project)
- AW Hooker notebook project (AW to discuss with Virginia Mills at Kew, AW and AH to discuss the possibility of offering this as a MSc project through computer science)
- Hooker correspondence pilot, possibly to incorporate the **Himalayan** journal.
- A hand list of Indian village records – **Minoti Chakravarty Kaul**.

It was agreed that smaller projects must be carried out with a view to their incorporation into the larger project. TANAP (University of Leiden) is noted as a useful example of such an infrastructure type output. The importance of leadership in such a large project is noted, a dedicated project manager, for which extra funding would be sought is recommended. In aiming at gaining funded it was decided that the project should not be pitched simply as digitisation, by tying in a number of actual research projects the bid is elevated beyond 'big data'.

GA mentioned the Belmont foundation as a possible source of funding. VD suggested RCUK

The time-frame addressed by the project was questioned, RA and RI spoke in favour of a focus on older sources (RI pre 1800, RA pre 1840) which are less well known. GA noted that while the BEIC ship's logs have been digitised where full instrumental data is available, the records from before this time also include much useful information, wind speed, direction, temperature as well as more qualitative observations. RA also noted the existence of an **Acre**-like project focussing on sea levels and a group at Nottingham working on extreme weather events with which the network should look to form links, AW noted the existence of tidal data at the Dehra Dun archive.

RA raised the issue of the MOU between the network and the BL suggesting that in his view, it had been less productive than it could or should be. Others pointed out the significance of **Damodaran, Endersby's Kew- India Hooker project with Kew as an example of good collaborative effort**, most importantly it was noted that the more significant results of the MOU were to come in the form of digitisation and research projects which were the general topic of the meeting.

AW noted the commitment in the network's original proposal to produce a 'technical road-map' for the ongoing project, it was agreed that this should be drafted by a member of the technical committee in the near future.

The 14<sup>th</sup> of May was identified as the preferred date for the meeting with Indian partners (BSI, Dehra Dun, National Museum of India) at Sussex, the following day was to include a visit to the BL and possibly the NHM in the afternoon. The alternate date of the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> were agreed in case either Indian partners or sufficient numbers of the steering or technical committees are unable to attend.

The subject of producing an edited volume was raised, the following list of preferred contributors was arrived at:

Bipasha Raha,  
Najaf Haider,  
Alicia Shrikker  
Kathleen Pribyl,  
Richard Gartner,  
Minoti Chakravarty -Kaul  
Sangeeta Dasgupta  
Mark Elvin  
Jayalmar Kathirithamby-Wells

AM suggested that the volume include a source list, VD spoke in favour of an academic paper from BL looking at medico-topographies and their potential as archives.