

## Minutes of co-ordinating and technical committee meeting 29<sup>th</sup> June 2012

### Attendees:

Vinita Damodaran (VD)  
Richard Gartner (RG)  
Alan Lester (AL)  
Kate Showers (KS)  
George Adamson (GA)  
Dominic Kniveton (DK)  
Anna Winterbottom (AW)

### Apologies:

Deepak Kumar (abroad)  
Rob Iliffe (abroad)  
Mark Elvin (unable to attend for personal reasons)  
Rob Allan (unable to attend as preparing for visit to China)

Meeting commenced 13:00

### Introduction

VD introduced the network. The purpose of the network is to bring together holding institutions in the UK and India and academics at several Universities working on the environmental/botanical history of the Indian Ocean world, including JNU, Sussex, ANU and elsewhere. The ultimate goal is the digitisation of archival information on the Indian Ocean world. The aim of network is to produce a technical roadmap towards a digitisation project. The purpose of the committee meeting is to discuss how to create the roadmap.

### Capabilities of digitisation project

RG discussed the capacities of a digital archive. Data enclosed can be coded in such a way as to maximise the search capabilities. The archive can be treated as a textual or analytical resource, with several layers in between. Part of the aims of network will be to identify standards and levels of analysis. One task is to identify categories of data – e.g. meteorological, textual data, correspondence and newspaper articles – which will need different treatment. KS suggested a template for people to input their own data. This would be particularly useful for rare material, including documents that may be in a poor condition. This would fit under the AHRC 'Care for the Future' remit. RG agreed that this would be an innovative approach.

It was agreed that templates for a digital archive would not be agreed until after the full network meetings.

### Letter of invitation and questionnaire

Delegates were presented a draft of an invitation letter to be sent out to all participants. It was mentioned that delegates should be asked to present a summary of their research and the materials that they use, so that the first network in December can be planned optimally. RG and KS suggested an online survey with specific categories. The exact nature of the categories was discussed; this was to be determined by the ultimate aim of the network. It was agreed that the questions should allow for:

- The identification of materials used by delegates;
- A description of materials/archives that delegates have been unable to use;
- An identification of the ways in which delegates use the archive materials they consult/would like to consult.

DK suggested the theme of research questions. It is important that delegates are aware of the themes of research that other delegates are undertaking. KS added that research questions regarding

digitisation can be put forward by the technical committee, who will be more aware of the possibilities.

The following subject areas were put forward:

What is the subject matter of your research?

What is your geographical area of research?

What is the subject matter of your research?

Which archival materials have you worked with?

Which archives do you plan to work with?

Are you aware of archives that you have not been able to access? If yes, please list.

With these data would you like to be able to? Make a quantitative manipulation, do a text search and browse, view a facsimile of the original, other

What are your data needs beyond the collections that you have mentioned?

KS suggested that archivists should answer the questions based on the needs of their users.

Survey Monkey was suggested by RG as the online platform for the questionnaire.

#### *Aims of network meetings*

The aims of the network meetings at Sussex and Delhi were agreed as being: to create a wider dialogue between those looking to use and protect archival material; to generate an opportunity for researchers to exchange information about disparate archives.

#### *Meeting administration*

It was agreed that Deepak Kumar would be liaised with immediately regarding Delhi meeting and that accommodation for the Sussex meeting would be booked as soon as the list of delegates had been finalised

The meeting finished at 14:00. VD, KS, RG and GA then remained to finalise the text of the network letter and online survey.