

Access to Materials on Malay World Studies from Leiden to Bangi: A Model for Information Repackaging on the Information Superhighway

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ABSTRAK

Rencana ini bertujuan untuk menerangkan sepintas lalu sejarah keserjanaan Belanda di Dunia Melayu untuk selanjutnya menerangkan dengan teliti sebab-sebab yang mendorong pembangunan koleksi-rencana-individu di ATMA. Kira-kira 300 tahun yang lalu, sarjana Belanda sudah mengasaskan pengajian Melayu sebagai disiplin kajian dengan mendirikan institut penyelidikan, menerbitkan buku dan jurnal, dan membangunkan koleksi perpustakaan. Walaupun perkembangan teknologi maklumat kini sudah mencetuskan minat yang kuat dalam pembinaan pangkalan data teks-penuh, tetapi belum lagi ada sebuah pangkalan data khusus untuk Dunia Pengajian Melayu. Memandangkan keadaan itu perlu dibaiki, maka kami di ATMA sudah terpanggil untuk membina pangkalan data rencana-individu dengan matlamat akhirnya dapat memenuhi keperluan yang meningkat daripada penyelidik terhadap khidmat teks-penuh. Ini diharapkan akan membawa perubahan daripada pembangunan koleksi yang menyeluruh secara yang lama yang diamalkan di perpustakaan di seluruh dunia.

Kata kunci: Belanda, Syarikat India Timur Belanda, Syarikat India Timur Inggeris, India Timur, pencarian maklumat, koleksi-artikel-individu, membuat fotokopi, pendigitan, IT, Internet

ABSTRACT

The aim of this paper is to outline the history of Dutch scholarship on the Malay World and to elaborate on reasons for developing a single-article-collection at ATMA. Some 300 years ago, Dutch scholars embarked on creating the discipline of Malay studies, founding research institutes, producing journals and books, and developing library collections. Today, despite the revolution in information technology that has witnessed an explosive interest in full-text databases, databases on Malay World Studies are extremely rare. In view of this scarcity, we at ATMA have been prompted to develop a single-articles-collection aimed primarily at meeting the growing needs of researchers for a full-text service. This represents a paradigm shift from the

conventional blanket collection development practised in libraries throughout the world.

Key words: Dutch, Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie, British East India Company, East Indies, information retrieval, individual-articles-collections, photocopying, digitization, IT, Internet

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DUTCH INVOLVEMENT IN MALAY WORLD STUDIES

Europeans came to the Malay World as early as the 15th century. For the first three centuries, they were not especially interested in the peoples, societies and cultures of the region. The Portuguese and Spaniards who came before the Dutch and the British finally lost their influence over that part of the world without leaving behind much trace of their scholarship on the Malay World. Ismail Hussein (1974: 3) attributed this general lack of interest among the early colonialists, which lasted until the end of the 18th century, not only to their preoccupation in trade and commercial enterprises, but also to their contemptuous attitude towards cultures outside Europe. He adds that it was only when the Romantic mood swept Europe at the end of the 18th century that European's interest shifted to studies of the cultures, languages and societies that developed Latin and Greek (1974: 4). This marked the beginning of an excitement among the Dutch and the British about new, unknown and exotic cultures. Nevertheless, their interest in the East Indies in particular, and the Malay World in general, was inextricably linked to economic, religious and political considerations, leading to rivalry between the VOC (*Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie*) (1602-1874) and the British East India Company (1600-1874). Kaap (1994: 637-638) rightly explained that the colonialists did not only need a strong army, navy and a well-trained civil service, but also scholarly and practical knowledge about the indigenous peoples, languages and cultures in order to achieve stable rule. In his critical survey of the role of *Bijdragen* in Dutch Indonesian studies, Teeuw (1994: 653-654) interpreted Dutch scholarly interest in her colony, the East Indies, as an offspring of the process of colonial state formation.

From reports, publications and library collections that have survived, one sees that during their long tenure in the East Indies, many Dutch civil servants became amateur scholars interested in the exotic societies, languages, cultures, fauna and flora that surrounded them. Together with professional scholars who arrived much later, these administrators-turned-scholars became competent in Malay, Javanese, Batak, Achehnese and many of the other dialects spoken on the mainland and islands of present-day Indonesia. Some of them, such as C. A. J. Hazeu, D. A. Rinkes, C. F. Pijper, Brandes, Jonker, Roolvink and Teeuw, served

Kantoor voor Inlandsche Zaken, established in 1899, with C. Snouck Hurgronje as the first adviser (Sham 1998: 66). During their sojourn, they learned about the cultures and nature of the East Indies, translated texts, recorded stories, collected artefacts and manuscripts from places as diverse as Batavia, Surabaya, Bandung, Jambi, Pontianak, Celebes, Palembang, Aceh and Bangkahulu. In due course, many gained a profound knowledge about Malay religion, beliefs, customs, rites and languages. An interest in Malay language and literature, for instance, had prompted J. J. de Hollander of the Royal Military Academy to write a handbook entitled *Handleiding bij de Beoefening der Maleische Taal en Letterkunde* in 1845 (Ismail Hussein 1974). Throughout this period, a wide range of research and academic societies were founded, and many books, monographs, catalogues, lists, guides, directories and reports were published. The breadth and depth of their scholarship provides us today with material that helps us understand earlier aspects of Dutch East Indian culture and science, and marked the beginning of active Dutch scholarship about the Malay World.

In the meantime, many young Dutch researchers were being trained in the important centres of Indonesian studies in Delft, Breda and Utrecht. From 1876 onwards, the centre for such studies shifted to the University of Leiden. In fact, it was the Dutch who founded the first ever chair for Javanese and Malay studies in Delft as early as 1842 (Jones 1984: 146). Another landmark in Dutch scholarship on Malay studies was the establishment of the Department of Malay Language and Literature at Leiden University in 1877 (Ismail Hussein 1974). This oldest university in the Netherlands, specialising until this day in philology, languages, linguistics, anthropology and sociology in the Malay World (Tol 1998), was responsible for awarding the first doctoral degree on Malay studies to Ph S van Ronkel in 1895 for his thesis on *De Roman van Amir Hamzah*. Other students awarded doctoral degrees on related disciplines were D. A. Rinkes (1909) for his thesis on *Abdoerraoef van Singkel, Bidgrage tot de Kennis van de Mystiek op Java en Sumatra*, G. F. Pijper (1924) on *Het Boek der Duizend Vragen*, A. A. Cense (1928) for *De Kroniek van Bandjarmasin*, J. Doorenbos (1933) for *De Geschriften van Hamzah Pansoeri, Uitgegeven en Toegelicht*, C. A. Mees (1935) for *De kroniek van Kouetai, Teksuitgave met Toelichting* and A. L. V. L. van der Linden (1937) for *De Europeaan in de Maleische Literatuur* (Ismail Hussein 1974). Although the number of dissertations was small, their contribution was priceless in that their works are still among the most important examples of serious research on their respective topics available today. Contributions from these scholars, together with those from administrators-turned-scholars, were shining examples of scholarship not only to their peer group, but also to coming generations, and not only to their countrymen, but also to the British counterparts that immediately followed them. Their works have been frequently cited and quoted in dissertations, seminar papers and other publications. In other words, our present knowledge of the Malay world is built to a great extent on the foundation they laid. This provides us with

substantial knowledge about aspects of language, literature, culture, beliefs, medicine, rites, ceremonies, songs, folklore, superstitions, legends, myths, epics, history, and birth and death rites among the many peoples in the region, such as the Malays, Javanese, Madurese, Minangkabaus, Acehese, Bataks, Maccassarese, Sundanese, Torajas and Moluccans, to mention a few.

The Dutch has an enviable record of scholarship about the East Indies. They were fortunate in having so many professional scholars and enterprising administrators-turned-scholars. They were backed in their endeavours by the VOC, research academies and universities, and commercial publishers and printers, both in the Netherlands and East Indies, and provided landmarks in the development of studies on the Malay world. Well-known commercial publishers included (and some are still surviving) E. J. Brill and Sythoff or A. W. Sijthoff and Doesburgh in Leiden; J. B. Wotters in Groningen; F. Gunst, J. M. Meulenhoff, Boekhandels, Verlagsgesellschaft Elsevier, Johannes Muller, J. H. de Bussy, Bijbel, H. J. Paris and Van Munster, all in Amsterdam; Druk van Albrecht, Visser, G. Kolff, Bale/ Balai Poestaka and Volkslectur in Weltevreden; J. C. van Schenk Brill in Doeshorgh; M. Nijhoff, N. V. Boekhandel, Joh Ijkema, W. P. van Stockum & Zoon and L Gerretsen in s'-Gravenhage; Hadi Poestaka and Stockum in Den Haag; J. C. Robbers, W. L. & J. Brusse N. V. and M. Wijt & Zohen in Rotterdam; H. D. Tjeenk Willink, De Erxen F. Bohn, De Erven Loosjes and Jean Enschede in Haarlem; De Drukkerij van Broese, Brosese & Comp. and De Koninklijke Militaire Academie in Te Breda; C. H. E. Breijer and H. Honing in Utrecht. Some of these even set up branches in the East Indies. They included H. M. van Dorp, Albrecht, Landsdrukkerij, Visser, Balai Poestaka, N. V. Boekhandel and G. Kolff all in Batavia; and A. C. Mix & Co in Bandoeng.

The above-mentioned list of presses and printers, specialising in publishing anything from books, monographs, journals and guides to lists, catalogues, bibliographies, directories and others undoubtedly provided an epitome of the extensive Dutch publishing programs from as early as the 17th century. Teeuw (1994: 655) identified three main categories of interest shown by the Dutch working and researching in the East Indies during the two centuries of the VOC's rule. There were

1. travelogues written and compiled by sailors, adventurers and other travellers. These include
 - a. F. W. Junghuhn's *Licht en Schaduwbeelden uit de Binnenlanden van Java* (Amsterdam: F. Gunst, 1867),
 - b. H. A. Lorentz's *Eenige Maanden Onder de Papoea's* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1905),
 - c. E. Nijland's *Schetsen uit Insulinde* (Utrecht: C. H. E. Breijer, 1893), and
 - d. L. J. van Rhijn's *Reis door den Indischen Archipel in het Belang der Evangelische Zending* (Rotterdam: M. Wijt & Zohen, 1851).

2. Dictionaries and grammar books on the Malay and other languages spoken in the East Indies and the Malay world were produced by Dutch missionaries such as Francois Valentijn, G. H. Werndly, H. C. Klinkert and A. L. van Hasselt. Other early books on record were:
 - a. M. J. van Baarda's *Leiddraad, bij het Bestuurdeeren van 't Galela'sch, Dialekt, op het Eiland Halmaheire* (s'-Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1980),
 - b. M. J. van Baarda's *Woodenlijst Galelareesch-Hollandsches* ('s Gravenhage: M. Nijhoff, 1895),
 - c. J. F. C. Gericke's *Javaansche-Nederduitsch Handwoordenboek* (Amsterdam: Johannes Muller, 1886), and
 - d. J. J. de Hollander's *Handleiding bij de Beoefening de Maleische Taal en Letterkunde* (Te Breda: Ter Drukkerij van Broese, 1893).
3. The third category was their early interest in the flora and fauna of the archipelago.

Teeuw also credited Dutch scholarship for the interest in the region shown by the British. It was basically through their research that we have knowledge about the primitive communities in Irian, as well as the *Orang Laut* and other *orang asli* living along the coasts or deep in the tropical virgin jungle. It was also through their research that we have some knowledge about the extent of Javanization and Hindunization in the early days and of Westernisation now in the Malay world at large.

Equally important to the scholarship about the Malay World was the establishment of research academies. Among the most prominent and longest surviving ones is *Bataviaasche Genootschap van Kunsten en Wetenschappen*. Established in 1778, it had continuously published a monograph series called *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasche Genootschap* from 1779 until 1950. Altogether, 95 volumes containing 335 articles saw the light of day (Lian The 1973). Although most articles were written by Dutch scholars in Dutch, contributions from non-Dutch scholars writing in English, French, German, Malay, Javanese, Balinese, Sundanese and even Latin and Arabic did appear. In 1851, the establishment of Koninklijk Instituut voor Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde (KITLV) in Delft, and the launching of its journal *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land en Volkenkunde* (BK1) one year later, can be interpreted as another sign of a growing interest in East Indies affairs among the Dutch. Like their British counterparts in Malaya, the Dutch had since the 17th century achieved a great deal in the field. KITLV has been published monograph series alongside its journal for a long time. *Bijdragen* is acknowledged as the longest surviving scholarly journal on Southeast Asia in the world. Teeuw credited this outstanding achievement by KITLV to its editorial policy: it "has adapted to the new situation, and, by doing so, has maintained, through its post-1950 publications, an internationally leading role in Indonesian studies. The adoption of English as the predominant language of its publications, and the fact that the

KITVL's various monograph series were also opened to non-Dutch authors, have been instrumental in maintaining this leading position" (1994: 662). The KITLV monograph series referred to are as follows:

1. Verhandelingen (VKI),
2. Translation series,
3. Bibliographical series,
4. Bibliotheca Indonesica,
5. Proceedings,
6. Werkdocumenten,
7. Excerpta Indonesica.

Generally, the ten most important journals on the Malay World published by relevant Dutch research academies and institutes are as follows:

1. *Verhandelingen van het Bataviaasch Genootschap* (VBG), 1779-1950,
2. *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandsch-Indie*, 1838-1902,
3. *Het Regt in Nederlandsch-Indie*, (1849-1914) succeeded by *Indisch Tijdschrift voor het Recht* (1915- 1942),
4. *Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (TBG), 1853-1958,
5. *Indische Gids*, 1879 -1941,
6. *Kolonial Tijdschrift*, 1912-1941,
7. *Djawa*, 1921-1941,
8. *Tijdschrift voor het Binnenlandsch Bestuur*,
9. *Koloniale Studien*, 1916-1941,
10. *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, Land- en Volkenkunde* (BKI), 1852-.

A total of some 6,000 articles, research reports and academic notes (excluding annual and administrative addresses, minutes, book reviews and other miscellaneous items) were published in the above-listed journals. From these, one gets a glimpse of the fluctuating fate of the once-powerful VOC and other institutes in the second part of the 18th century, showing how the involvement of politics and trade in scholarly pursuits was intellectually detrimental. They cover a wide range of subjects, and express the shifting interests and varied accomplishments of officials, researchers and scholars, covering the collection and editing of manuscripts, the establishment of libraries in the East Indies and the expansion of libraries in the Netherlands, and relations between the Dutch and the locals. More importantly, in the pages of these journals, particularly *BKI*, some of the most important works on Indonesian and Malay studies were published. Many of them have been used as basic texts in history, sociology, anthropology, literature, *adat* law and other subjects in universities offering Malay and Indonesian studies throughout the world. Understandably, our knowledge of the Malay World in general, and in the past two centuries in

particular, owes much to Dutch pioneering scholarship. The prominent and prolific scholars who published in one or more of the journals mentioned earlier included N. Adraini, J. C. Anceaux, J. C. Baud, C. C. Berg, L. W. C. van den Berg, J. de Blaauw, P. Bleeker, J. Brandes, A. A. Cense, T. C. T. Deeleman, H von Dewell, S. van Dissel, L. C. D. van Dijk, W. M. Donselaar, P. Drabbe, G. W. J. Drewes, E. H. Ehlenbeck, M. G. Emeis, H. J. de Graaf, J. Gonda, J. R. P. F. Gongrijp, J. J. M. de Groot, J. Habbema, J. van Hasel, J. S. Heurnius, A. L. van Hasselt, J. J. Hoffman, J. J. de Hollander, L. Horner, Chr. Snouck Hurgronje, P. E. de Josselin de Jong, P. H. van der Kemp, A. W. T. Juynboll, H. Kern, R. A. Kern, H. C. Klinkert, P. A. Leupe, S. Muller, E. Netscher, G. K. Niemann, , J. Noorduynd, Th Pigeaud, J. Pijnappel, C. M. Pleyte, W. H. Rassers, T. Roorda, Ph S van Ronkel, A. Ruyl, G. Schlegel, G. Simens, W. L. Steinhart, A. B. Cohen Stuart, H. N. van der Tuuk, H. van der Veen, J. Ph Vogel, P. Voorhoeve, J van der Vliet, A. C. Vreede, L de Vries, H. C. van der Wijck, C. F. Winter and P. J. Zoetmulder. Their initiatives, enthusiasm and interests were stimulated, nourished, sustained and developed by the journals of the time. The quantity and diversity of the articles also reflected the direction of Dutch scholarly research interest throughout the period. These monumental publications studied the peoples, the land, the languages and the cultures of the East Indies. We are immensely indebted to them for the fountain of knowledge that they have left behind. They demonstrated a great interest in research and in collecting materials from the huge and sprawling maritime complex that is the Malay World, now home to over 350 million people. The interest in this region is easily kept alive by the fact that “countries in the Malay World are bound by so many distinctive and continuous strands and separated by so many cleavages [so] that expressions like ‘unity in diversity’ and ‘diversity in unity’ have become almost synonymous with it” (Sandhu 1981: 15).

In writing this paper, we have been fortunate in being able to refer to the special issue of “150 volumes of *Bijdragen*: a backward glance and a forward glimpse”, edited by Harry A. Poeze (BK1 150: 4, 1994: 635-859). Although the critical and exhaustive articles by G. Knaap (637-652), A. Teeuw (653-684), Peter Boomgaard (685-702), Jos D. M Platenkamp and Michael Prager (703-727), Jan Michiel Otto, Albert Dekker and Cora de Waaij (728-754), Hein Steinhauer (755-784), Heather Suterland (785-804) and Reimar Schefold (805-825) do not express the whole range of Indonesian studies in the Netherlands, they do reflect through their broad scope and their pre-dominantly area-oriented character, the Dutch tradition in Malay/Indonesian studies. Teeuw (1994: 660) had considered these articles “to represent the spin-off of many large-scale research projects, the results of which are primarily to be found in monographs”.

Let us now look at some individual Dutch scholars and administrators-turned-scholars. Among these were the gigantic figures of Hendrik Kern and Snouck Hurgronje. The former, a Sanskrit expert, extended his interest very successfully into language and literature in the East Indies. The latter was an Islamologist and an acclaimed expert on the Achehnese language. Another

interesting figure was P. P. Roorda van Eysinga (1796-1856), who first went to the East Indies as an army lieutenant in 1819. There, he became interested in the Malay language. The following year, he was transferred to the civil service and later he began to collect and study Malay literature. Grinjs (1996: 353) wrote that H. N. van der Tuuk (1824-1894), born in Malacca, owed his fame to his pioneering work in Austronesian linguistics with his thorough studies of the Batak, Old Javanese and Balinese languages. Most of his writings were in Dutch. Of particular importance is the translation of his *Tobasche Spraakkunst* 2 vols (1864-67), *Bataksch Leesboek* 4 vol.s (1860-62) and *Kawi-Balinesch-Nederlandsch Woordenboek* 4 vols (1897-1912). Throughout his productive career as a scholar, van der Tuuk also pursued the study of the Malay language. Teeuw (1994: 37) remarked that “casting a glance over [G. W. J.] Drewes’s work as a whole, one sees that Islam in Indonesia in all its facets was his favorite subject of research throughout his scholarly life, which began with his dissertation on Javanese mystics and ended with his publication on the mystical poetry of the greatest Malay poet. His extensive philological and literary historical work, and more especially his editions of texts, will leave many future generations of scholars indebted to him. When all kinds of ephemeral theories and fashions will have long faded and passed into oblivion, Drewes’s work will live on as a monument to philological mastery and literary historical expertise”.

Another fascinating figure was C. C. Berg, who studied the literary magic in Old Javanese *kratons* and the power of poet-magicians who could enhance the power and glory of Javanese kings (Ismail Hussein 1974). In the meantime, W. H. Rassers, a cultural anthropologist, studied *Panji* stories, Pijnappel and Van Ophusyen studied Malay *pantun*, Stutterheim studied the myths of the Rama in the local literature, Piper, a student of Islamic theology, studied *Kitab Seribu Mas’al* and compared it with Arabic sources, G. A. Hazeu studied the *wayang* culture, while Ronkel and Van Leeuwen studied Amir Hamzah and Malay Alexander stories. Detailed information on the life history, achievements and contributions of G. W. J. Drewes, J. Gonda, J. Kats and a host of others can be gleaned from obituaries prepared and published from time to time, some in the above-mentioned journals. The recent obituaries found in *BKI* were prepared by Ensink (1992), Collins (1992), Johns (1992), Poeze (1994), Schoorl (1994), Teeuw (1994), and Grinjs (1996) respectively. Devoting much of their energy and time to the study of the Malay world, these figures, among many more, were men of great enterprise in their respective fields, displaying considerable foresight and leaving behind notable contributions. Reading their publications, one cannot but admire their breath and depth of scholarship. Criticisms of their weaknesses are mainly directed to shortcomings in the methodology and the approaches of their time, rather than to their personal scholarship. For example, Ismail Hussein (1974: 15) laments that “the studies of Malay and Indonesian culture have always been somewhat like the studies of Greater-India culture and Greater-Arabia culture. Successive students of Malay literature and culture spent their

time tracing the sources of foreign elements in Malay culture". Nevertheless, the important point is that their works are records of scholarship from a particular point of time.

It was the Dutch who, together with the British, started the collection of Malay manuscripts. However, a cursory survey of Malay studies in general suggests that the Dutch had achieved far more than the British in this field. This is reflected not only in the Dutch establishing the world's first university chair for Javanese and Malay studies in Delft and Leiden as early as 1842 and 1877 respectively, or that the first doctoral title for Malay studies was awarded to Ronkel in 1895, but also that the Dutch had a longer odyssey of bibliographic control of Malay manuscripts began by Francois Valentijn, a Dutch missionary-historian, in 1726. He cited a number of Malay manuscripts known to him in the fifth volume of his gigantic work *Oud en Nieuw Oost-Indien*. Other early catalogues published were *Catalogus van de Maleische en Sundaneesche Handschriften...* by J. J. Juynboll. (Leiden: Leidsche Univesiteits-Bibliotheek, 1899), and *Supplement Catalogus der Maleische en Minangkabausche Handschriften in de Leidsche-Bibliotheek* by Ph S van Ronkel (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1921). It was also the Dutch in particular and other Europeans in general who started commercial duplication of Malay manuscripts in the 19th century by paying the Malays to do so. Munshi Abdullah mentioned in *Hikayat Abdullah* that his father was offered money and letters by Dutch officers in Batavia to collect Malay manuscripts (Ding 1987: 428).

It is worth mentioning here that with the growth in scholarship and research in the Netherlands and Batavia, many historical and academic institutions therein made serious efforts to acquire materials related to Malay studies. Profiles of major document collections in the Netherlands relevant to Malay studies, including VOC archives stretching from 1602 to 1824, can be referred also in Tol (1998). These collections has ever since then served as a nucleus for further collection activities. For example, the collection of some 200 Malay manuscripts by H. C. Klinkert, a Dutch missionary, is now kept in the Library of Leiden University. Similarly, H. von de Wall's collection of some 300 Malay manuscripts is now kept in the National Library of Indonesia in Jakarta and copies of letters in Algemeen Rijkarchief in The Hague. Retrospectively, Leiden University did solicit the assistance of VOC to attain objects relevant to scientific research, although most of the objects initially collected at random, including Javanese *lontar palmleaf* manuscripts by Frederik de Houtman, were valued for their ornamental merit, and not for their scientific content (Tol 1998: 10-11). Nevertheless, it is no surprise that older institutions possess larger collections of materials relating to Malay studies. Indeed, we owe much of what we know about the Malay World's past to these scholars who had played a definitive role in pioneering, promoting and preserving knowledge about the Malay world. In the process, they turned the Netherlands into the important centre for Malay studies that it is today. As observed by Jones (1984: 133) the lifelong and

indefatigable interest in local customs, history, antiquities and other pursuits which scholars of their day engaged in is what fascinates us today.

From the 17th century onwards, Dutch scholars and librarians found themselves in the midst of “a golden age” of Malay and Indonesian artefacts collection. The collecting tradition they started emphasised active acquisition, volume building and bibliographic control. From the wealth of the collection, one may be excused from thinking that there could hardly have been any Malay material accessible to outsiders which the Dutch and British did not know about or collect. The preservation of these materials and their duplicates throughout the world forms the basis for the continuity of Malay studies and consequently continues to excite scholars from all over the world, today and indefinitely. Thanks to the efforts of these pioneers, Malay studies is today a recognised field of research.

NEW TRENDS IN INFORMATION RETRIEVAL

After discussing various problems in bibliographic control and availability of Malaysiana and Southeast Asian materials in a series of articles (1984a, 1984b, 1985, 1996, 2000a), we will now attempt to highlight a new model for collection building and management.

Given time, libraries tend to attain more material. An insoluble question is how will they be made increasingly accessible? Similarly when books and journals leapfrog in numbers, will access to them become more elusive? Do we need alternative forms of access or only new technologies? Underlying these questions is a universal concern about how to access materials quickly and easily. What can we do to meet the challenges in information retrieval in the 21st century and in the far future? What is the best we can hopefully achieve? How can this optimal situation be established and maintained in competition with numerous other academic and research needs and with decreasing human and material resources at hand? We at ATMA have tried to solve these problems by setting a priority on how and what to collect immediately, and what to defer to the future. We certainly cannot achieve the impossible, but we cannot fail in small and certain issues (Ding & Supyan 2000b). As knowledge becomes more interdisciplinary, standard bibliographies and conventional special collections have become less effective and useful. Following the development of full-text databases, networked or otherwise, researchers now expect and demand faster, easier and more efficient access to materials. Databases have increased by 300% since 1985, and today 7,000 database producers churn out 4-5 billion records for public consumption (Rutsen et al. 1993: 42). Despite that, there is not a single commercial database serving Malay studies. In such a setting, the relevant research institutes and libraries should search for new ways to manage their collections and to serve researchers.

ATMA is committed to promoting inter-disciplinary, cross-disciplinary (as it is sometimes called), or even pluri-disciplinary research. This is mainly due to the fact that scholarship on the Malay World has increasingly moved into science and technology, and is no longer confined to the social sciences as in the past. In the meantime, the inherently interdisciplinary nature of sociology and anthropology is continuously being emphasised. Another striking trend in Malay studies is the spread of interdisciplinary work into the depths of virtually every discipline in the Humanities. One can find articles on the Malay World not only in publications devoted to Malay studies, but also in those that have nothing to do with Malay studies. Apparently, the traditional demarcation of subject specialisation has become blurred and has increased our concern about the configuration of PATMA's (Perpustakaan Institut Tamadun and Alam Melayu) research collection. It is a general rule that for a collection to serve researchers well, it must expand systematically to include as much material form as many sources as possible. The crux of the problem is the balance between growth with accessibility. Innumerable difficulties are involved in providing material to an expanding and diversifying clientele. Increasing accessibility demands a new approach in the development and management of a collection, as well as increasing co-operation between libraries. Persistent problems in getting hold of concrete material easily and quickly, spread out as they often are in diverse collections – from PATMA at UKM, Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka and PNM (Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia) in Kuala Lumpur, Koleksi Za'ba at the University of Malaya and USM (Universiti Sains Malaysia) in Penang and Special Collection at Kedah State Library in Alor Star – all of whom have special banks of material relevant to Malay studies, inspired us to develop a database based on photocopies of individual articles relevant to the Malay World. We attempt to extract and organise some 40,000 to 50,000 articles now scattered at different locations, in different formats and languages, in various sizes from books and journals, online or as flimsily bound, and oddly shaped and quasi-published items that do not seem to fit into any usual publication category. Eventually, this collection will have more materials than each of the individual Malay World library collections have at UKM, UM, DBP, PNM or USM. Nevertheless, this “new” collection should not be seen, in Brainin's words (2000: 25), as a “de-centering” of PATMA, or the Southeast Asian Collection at Perpustakaan Tun Seri Lanang or any other library. In fact, it merely complements them in many useful ways. An effective library created through the pooling together of scattered library resources will have a strong advantage over a departmental or branch library in exposing researchers to a large range of materials. This broad-based core collection of extensive materials will be able to satisfy the needs of most researchers in a way no single institution can accomplish at the moment.

This core collection was inspired by the impressive innovation of individual-articles-delivery on CD-ROM and other online databases. This method of document delivery was an improvement over on-demand publishing system

adopted by UMI (University Microforms International) and BLID (British Library Lending Division). We coined a new term – “individual-articles-collection” – in order to differentiate it from normal special collections. The new model represents collection development in a new age, and which builds on advance knowledge about researcher needs and expectations. Awareness of archival formats and materials has led researchers to expect diversity of access. The term “special collection” has a tendency to conjure a featureless mass of material not easily available to researchers without the time or inclination to dig through unsorted material. Such impersonal document access is quite out of date today. Essentially, our claim is that this new collection will produce better results than traditional special collections. The conventional concept of branch libraries having blanket collections on a special subject is no longer viable in a technological environment where personalised, customised and made-to-order services can easily be made available. The contents of special collections seldom satisfy specific researcher needs. Materials related to the Malay World, when bunched together with unrelated materials, and “individually-unindexed”, become *grey literature*, unattractive, unreachable, unknown and uninteresting to most scholars. To increase user-unfriendliness and accessibility, we repackage them by extracting and indexing the relevant articles individually. This individual-articles-collection is done through an understanding of the intellectual content of the individual items and the needs of the users, in the wake of an explosion of multidisciplinary programs in the academic world. Indeed, this does challenge conventional subject specialisations where items are acquired and classified within the confines of single academic areas of inquiry to serve the narrow needs of intra-disciplinary groups.

Repackaging involves reformatting materials of various formats, sizes, forms and sources for subsequent delivery through photocopying. By conventional photocopying and individual indexing, the collection can be easily searched and retrieved by using key words in natural language. Key word access is so far the most popular and widely used method in information retrieval and offers a simplified access to different documents related to one another either by author, title, subject, keywords and derived terms. Integrating these materials by using serially-run accession numbers can overcome the problems of insufficient use encountered by most special collections. There, relevant materials are not easily available to the user. This effort should put an end to problems caused by a complex array of services operated with different emphases, professionalism, equipment and technology. We also hope that this model of collection development and management will enable researchers to access all types of information regardless of their original or previous storage media. By making information products user-focused, and moving away from the one-collection-for-all approach, we put an end to the wasteful and unnecessary hide-and-seek games researchers are often forced to play. The term ‘individual-articles-collection’ does not only describe what we do, but also acknowledges a new model for

information access. More importantly, this interdisciplinary database takes the diversity of researchers into consideration, and displays the following prominent features:

1. One-stop-research: an extensive range of materials can be found at one access point.
2. Accessibility: easy retrieval with no long and complicated searches.
3. Customised searches: searches can be done on an item-by-item basis and items can be accessed via documents related either by author, title, subject or keywords.

In short, this derivative photocopy collection, together with the above-mentioned value-added services, is superior in many important ways to the “raw materials” concept where the items remain in their original form.

After this database was initiated in April 1999 by Prof Shamsul Amri Baharuddin, the ninth director of ATMA, it has grown by leaps and bounds. Malay World research has always suffered from the inaccessibility of relevant materials, scattered as they are over the whole world. The academic and cultural costs have been high because of this. The new collection is revolutionary in that it provides old and new materials to researchers, and frees them to an extent from commercial databases with pre-designed products, which can only fulfil limited research requirements in any case. In other words, we cannot leave the future of collection development in the hands of commercial databases. Similarly, we cannot continue to rely on electronic information and resources that we do not own (Lesk 1997). The key issue in database building, as in collection building, is to amass as much of the relevant materials as possible. The proliferation of publications on one hand, and new information retrieval technologies on the other, must somehow be integrated. Without new materials, library collections will become stagnant, obsolete and forgotten. With a growing collection and appropriate technology, a good network will provide easy access to various library collections. No doubt, IT, despite its power in storage, retrieval and dissemination, is not a panacea for solving all the information problems we are encountering. Nevertheless, the Internet is profoundly altering the conventional policies of many institutions, and not always in a planned and comprehensive fashion. There is, for example, a belief in the boundless resources available on the Internet and at commercial databases, which has led library fund-providers to argue that there is no longer a need for individual collection development. So far, only a small portion of materials on and in the Malay world has found its way onto the Internet and other databases. We, at ATMA, believe strongly in judging the strength of research institutes by the size, relevance and comprehensiveness of the research collection available to affiliated and registered researchers, regardless of technological innovations. By developing a comprehensive collection, we can anticipate “just-in-case” as well as “just-in-

time” demands. This database is not meant to compete with the likes of *Excerpta Indonesica*, which has indexed 25,000 articles since 1970, or SASI (Southeast Asian Serials Index), (<http://database.anu.edu.au/asia/indo/> – a joint project between KITLV and ANU (Australian National University), but to complement them. As long as the scenario remains, we shall continue to collect and index intensively materials relevant to our fields of competence. We shall continue to add to our collection new materials in various formats, but also to care for the collection we already have. Some of them do require special care. We also aspire to digitise some of the materials and make them available on the Internet. Financial resources for purchasing appropriate and better technology and hiring competent research assistants are vital to the continued health of the project.

CONCLUSION

Many have asked why we base this project on conventional photocopying. Understandably, they do not see much of a future for print collections, since print materials will sooner or later be replaced by electronic publications. However, we believe that electronic publishing will not replace the printing press. Instead, it will stimulate an immense growth in the amount of materials printed. No one medium will completely take the place of another. We envisage that libraries in the future will be stocked with a rich mix of traditional print materials, existing side by side with digital or Internet-only works, and other media yet to be invented (Valauskas 2000: 109). It is still unclear whether network communication will bring more freedom or restriction to the dissemination of information and material. No matter what is it, we have two immediate problems. First and foremost, the current electronic environment is “too immature for it to become a trusted and reliable medium for the collection and preservation of the record of scholarship” (Valauskas: 27), suffering as it does from incompatible interfaces, frequent search engine crashes, different terms and conditions in licensing agreements and many other related problems. Second, in moving towards a “pay-for-use” model, digital materials have already begun to disrupt the free flow of information and scholarly contact (Branin et al. 2000: 30). On the other hand, print materials can be borrowed any number of times, and more importantly, they can be copied within the limits of copyright law and fair use guides. Again, given the choice, most libraries prefer print publications to electronic ones if the latter merely means the electronic replication of print materials. The reasons are obvious: their durability are more reliable and they will not have accessible problems in the future. Already there are materials on diskettes, microforms, tapes, CD-ROMs and databases that can no longer be read because the relevant access software is already unavailable. In short, technology can perform more and more functions to satisfy more and more human needs in an ever growing variety of ways, but the importance of IT to

researchers in Malay studies should not be over emphasised. This is partly because the vast majority of Internet users are not running the latest generation of Internet browser software on the latest computer hardware. Despite the fact that there are more and more web-based catalogues on Malay and Southeast Asian studies, which boast a global audience, researchers still have difficulties in retrieving materials. They cannot have instant retrieval of complete copies of documents because of copyright, technical and financial problems.

Collection development is always about choices. Technologies such as the facsimile and photocopying have brought changes to the way scholars conduct research and to expectations of what research libraries have to offer. After a thorough study on collection ownership, collection development, copyright problems, technical capability, financial affordability and the interest of researchers at the centre, we choose the technology appropriate for us. After giving due consideration to software and hardware obsolescence problems, and limitations on time, staff and funds, we feel the conventional photographic technique is the most practicable and therefore the best choice. We are admittedly not immune to the temptation of IT, but we feel that an investment in photocopying for preservation and accessibility continues to be the wisest thing to do. We do not fear that technology will leave us far behind in the process, mainly because photocopying, like digitising, does not only offer many opportunities for reformatting materials and increasing access, it also promises a bewildering array of options for storage and delivery. Photocopies do not preclude us from digitising materials for digital access in the future. In any case, collection development is not only about technology, but information management as well, and also what research institutes can do to create content, manage it, add value to it, stretch it, recycle it and transmit it, whether through photocopying, microfilming or digitising. So far print materials, including photocopies, have survived many threats of extinction and their position has been enhanced with every new medium of technology. In other words, photocopies, like other print materials, will not disappear. Photocopying can also be used for easy conservation of print content. Preservation through constant photocopying is cheaper and more practical when compared to the costly periodic migration of digital information, which is necessitated by every major technological change in writing, displaying, storing and retrieving. Nevertheless, it is only fair to mention that this semi-automated collection lacks the following potential of electronic information:

1. The ability to match the speed of thought with a simultaneous speed of communication,
2. The varying and complex development of access points to information,
3. The ability to use hyperlinks, through HTML language, to enable seamless access to information,
4. Researchers cannot control the amount of information they want,
5. The potentiality for remote access.

Other common problems with photocopying include the deterioration of quality at each successive reproduction, as is the case with microfilms, the acid content of the paper medium and the problems of wear and tear.

Having said all that, we would like to reiterate that it is the emergence of repackaging of articles in CD-ROM and other online databases that not only amazed, but also prompted us to embark on this project. Harnessing ideas from digital databases, we “reinvent” the conventional collection development to enable researchers to retrieve information and materials in as many new ways as possible. At the same time, we admit that there are inadequacies in this model. This is a daunting and long-term project, and we collect whatever materials we can and collaborate with other institutions. It is our goal at ATMA to provide our researchers with more access to information and materials than ever before. Because of copyright problems, we cannot offer materials to users through fax, or ILL, wherever they are. Neither do we claim to develop a virtual collection. Only bibliographic information of all the available texts can be searched through the Internet, and researchers avail themselves of the list of items, arranged either by subject, author, title, publisher, or keyword.

Throughout this paper we have stressed that the issue of material ownership is vital to the provision of access. Taking this issue one step further, Kane emphasises that ownership and accessibility to materials are partners that supplement and build on one another, transforming libraries into dynamic and competent information and research centres (1997: 59). The size, the scope, the depth, unique specialities and characteristics of its material collection decide the status of any research institute to a large extent. The validity of the collection is determined by how effectively the needs of researchers are fulfilled. It must be said that the individual-articles-collection at ATMA is developed with the intention of maximising the exploitation of materials by researchers, particularly those affiliated to the institution.

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