

**ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY
HONG KONG BRANCH
LIBRARY**

REPORT FOR THE YEAR 2003/2004

As of 1 March 2004, the library collection had increased to 5,081 volumes. A total of 225 volumes were added during the year. Donations of books were received from Dr Patrick Hase, Dr James Hayes, Mr L.B.M. Litmaath, Mrs Mary Painter, Mr Andrew Tse, Mr Mynak R. Tulku (Director of National Library of Bhutan), and Dr Dan Waters. Gift of books were also received from Hungary's Academy of Sciences (*Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae*), Foundation of Islamic Cultural Propagation in the World, Hong Kong Museum of History, The Siam Society, Sweden Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities. The Journal of the Siam Society and the National History Bulletin from the Siam Society were personally brought back by our Council members, Mr Peter Stuckey and Mr Jason Wordie when they stopped by Bangkok. We would like to thank all our donors and welcome future contributions of old and rare books or journals.

Following the exercise with the Public Libraries last year, great effort was also made to identify missing volumes of the Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society in academic and museum libraries in Hong Kong. To keep RASHKB journals up to date so that users will be able to have access to the complete set, Council members agreed to send missing copies to these Libraries on the condition that they will take out a subscription for future issues. All the ten academic institutions including University of Hong Kong, Chinese University of Hong Kong, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong Institute of Education, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong University of Science & Technology, Lingnan University, and Open University of Hong Kong; as well as three museums, namely Antiquities & Monuments Office, Hong Kong Heritage Museum and Hong Kong Museum of History now have a complete set of the Society Journal. We will be sending Hong Kong Museum of Medical Sciences a set of the Society Journals soon and are in the process of granting them Honorary Institutional membership with the understanding that they would assist and encourage scholars in using their Museum to write articles on incidents of medical history in Hong Kong for our Journal. The Shanghai Library was also offered Honorary Institutional membership during Patrick Hase's trip to Shanghai.

The Arnold Graham Collection has now been fully processed and catalogued. It was sent to the Conservation Unit of the Hong Kong Central Library for fumigation in April 2003. The Collection comprises a total of 423 volumes, with 361 volumes in English and 62 volumes in Chinese. Since they are of historical and intrinsic value, the whole Collection has been moved to the Rare Book Room. A white round label with the initial "A.G." indicating Arnold Graham is adhered to the spine of each book for easy identification.

At the Council meeting on 22 September 2003, it was resolved that borrowing privileges of Honorary Institutional Members be modified. One membership card will be issued to the Secretary of each of the Honorary Institutional Members and the membership card could be lent to any member of that Institution, but only to one member per month. Each member of that institution would be allowed to borrow only one book at a time for a period of 1 month. Regular members could borrow 3 items at any one time for 2 months with a maximum of 10 items.

Talks of RAS speakers have been recorded in tapes for years. In order to better preserve the content, it was decided that these tapes be digitized if permission is granted by the speaker. The Hong Kong Central Library has kindly offered, for free service, to digitize these tapes

since they are produced by the Library. The digitized version will be mounted on the Multimedia Information System, available for convenient access in the Public Libraries via the System. Since retroactive consent of previous talks could not be obtained, it was agreed that while these tapes will be digitized for preservation purpose, the CDs will be placed in the RAS Rare Book Collection, available for use in the Library but not for loan. To date, 6 records (10 tapes) from 1988 to 1994 were digitized, available for listening in the Hong Kong Public Libraries via their Multimedia Information System; 34 records (37 tapes) are in preparation and 38 records (39 tapes) are pending for digitization. There are a total of 78 records (86 tapes).

Council members also expressed interest in digitizing a collection of old RTHK radio programmes related to the history of Asia and Hong Kong in an effort to preserve the culture and heritage of Asia. These are tapes that RTHK will not be able to digitize due to limited resources. The Hong Kong Central Library has requested a list of these titles and arrangement has been made to digitize 11 of them. RAS will pursue digitization for the remaining 34 titles if rights could be obtained.

Following the success of the exhibition of the Society's photo archives on Western District in the University of Hong Kong Libraries in January 2000, a similar exhibition was held in the University Libraries in August 2003. These photographs illustrate domestic, industrial and commercial buildings and interesting street scenes in Sheung Wan and Western District in Hong Kong in the 1960's. Again, it aroused great interest. A Library user spotted a man in a photograph that looked very much like his father and requested a copy of this photograph. The Home Affairs Bureau also requested access to our photo archives to assist them in reviewing their existing policy on heritage preservation. Some of these photos were published in the book: *Hong Kong Going and Gone* and 14 copies were sold during the exhibition. In response to demonstrated interest, a new Committee has now been formed to compile all other photos in the Society not included in *Hong Kong Going and Gone* and publish a brand new book on cultural and architectural heritage of the Central and Western district.

Concerning usage of the RAS Collection, as compared to last year, reference enquiries had increased by 29%. There is a 64% drop in books being loaned out, perhaps users are making use of pleasant environment in the Library to read and research rather than borrowing the books.

As reported by the Hong Kong Central Library, usage of the RAS Library for the period from 1 March 2003 to 29 February 2004 was as follows:

Library Usage	2002/2003	2003/2004
No. of reference enquiries	179	231
No. of books consulted	408	327
No. of borrowers	28	19
No. of books loaned out	67	24

I would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Hong Kong Central Library for their assistance and highly professional service to our members during the year.

Ms. Julia Chan
 Hon. Librarian
 1 March 2004