

In the common pursuit of Asia knowledge and its dissemination, this roundtable discussion aims to bring together two interdependent sides of a divide: users of Asia-related research material and those who seek to provide them. On one side is the recognition that Australia is facing its 'Asian Century' and the need to build its Asia-related research and teaching resources (books, journals, newspapers, data, etc.) across the disciplines. On the other side are the information providers vociferously pushing to meet this need amidst budget cuts, institutional constraints, the encroachment of generalisation and a changing technology landscape. This discussion aims to bring to the fore some of these under-discussed and -illuminated issues and challenges by traversing the divide between the academic pursuit and the provision of information sources for the study of the region, and jointly consider possible strategies to tackle these issues within the Australian context.

Panel 1

Day 1: 11.00 - 12.30 Coombs Seminar Room A

Papers discuss new directions of Asian Studies and digital research, the reduction in information specialisation and its impact on academic research and activity.

Presenter 1: Prof. Robert Cribb (ANU)

Title: New directions in Asian Studies and the implications for research method

Abstract: The last two decades have seen a profound 'thinning out' of the Asian Studies tradition that was based on deep familiarity with history and with 'high' cultural traditions and on research competence in more than one language. This tradition was inter-disciplinary and therefore relatively isolated from discipline-focussed scholarship. In its place we now have an approach which is much more theoretically informed but empirically weaker. The change has been driven partly by the intellectual power of theory, partly by the drive for social and policy relevance and partly by the constriction of opportunities for long and thorough training. Old-style scholars regret the shift, but the new accessibility of electronic research resources offers the change of achieving impressive results, even within the limitations of the new approach.

Presenter 2: Dr. Vanessa Hearman (USyd)

Title: Library resources support for academics' research: some thoughts

Abstract: This presentation will look at the forms of support and expertise academics need in terms of accessing research Asia-related resources from libraries based on a comparison of experiences at the Universities of Melbourne and Sydney in the past few years. In the current funding- and digital environments, I will discuss how librarians and academics could work together to ensure optimal access and service.

Presenter 3: Dr. Aline Scott-Maxwell (Monash/UniMelb libraries)

Title: Language and area studies specialists in libraries in a changing resource and budgetary environment

Abstract: Asian studies programs in Australian universities and Asian-language collections in university libraries have traditionally been supported by specialist librarians with expert area studies knowledge and Asian language skills. However, pressure on staffing budgets in Australian academic libraries is increasingly impacting on these arrangements with solutions ranging from the appointment of librarians required to support multiple languages or the sharing of expertise between libraries to reliance on generalist librarians. The paper discusses the role of

and need for the specialist Asian studies librarian within the contemporary Asian studies, library resourcing and online environments, considering both researcher and library perspectives.

Panel 2

Day 1: 13.30 – 15.00 Coombs Seminar Room A

Papers discuss the need for a national approach to building Australia's Asia-related research resources and the strategies for achieving that.

Discussants: Diane Costello (CAUL), Libby Cass (NLA) (tbc)

Presenter 1: Dr Amrita Malhi (ASAA Council)

Title: National cooperative collection development (tbc)/collecting ephemera

Abstract: This paper discusses the difficulty in convincing libraries to be responsive to important events, and to collect the ephemera generated from these events for future research, e.g. a historic election in Malaysia that went by without anyone making a commitment to collect the ephemera that was produced. It is left to individual researchers to collect and store the material in conditions that are not optimal for preservation, and hence, not made accessible to others.

Presenter 2: Dr Amy Chan (ANU Library)

Title: Digitising research resources and the need for a national approach

Abstract: It is well recognized that the best means of preserving research material (manuscripts, sound recordings, newspapers, ephemera, etc.) is to digitise them, which also allows for greater dissemination and wider applications. It is now accepted and expected to have electronic access to most information and resources. Yet, for many of the geographic regions we study, much of the research resources are not findable via the usual search engines, and not accessible without travelling. In the present digital age, the pressing question is why is this the case? Whose responsibility should this fall to? What are the institutional, financial and/or technological impediments to bridge?

Presenter 3: Dipin Ouyang (NLA)

Title: Challenges in current Web Archiving

Abstract: Archiving information from the live web is a challenge for all librarians and archivists. The National Library of Australia started its Asia and Pacific Web Archiving in 2008 through the commercial web archiving service Archive-It. However, given the increase in amount of information available online, individual organisations are challenged to respond effectively on their own. Hence the need to explore a collaborative model for web archiving becomes more acute. The paper discusses the changes the National Library of Australia faces in web archiving and the benefits of collaboration.

Presenter 4: Friederike Schimmelpfennig (ANU Library – in absentia)

Title: Cross Asia, a national, subject-oriented virtual platform for Asian Studies resources: access for all to a greater variety of materials

Abstract: Why should any institution buy every single-resource itself? Why should every institution negotiate for non-CAUL materials itself? Do we really need to prove our potency by saying we can afford this or that resource? Could there be another way?

Collaborative use of electronic databases and other electronic materials has a bit of a history in Germany. An almost 25 year history of union catalogues and a big interest from the political side to enhance and enlarge this kind of services also enabled other projects to rise. One of them is CrossAsia, a collection of electronic resources for Asian Studies, licensed for nation-wide use. Maintained by the State Library of Berlin and other cooperation partners, it allows access for every citizen living in Germany to the collection of meanwhile 129 electronic resources. Negotiations and technical maintenance is provided by the State Library of Berlin. With further funding of the German Research Foundation the future services of CrossAsia will be developed further, like a digitisation-on-demand service, a virtual research platform for Asian Studies, and an e-publishing service.

In the following article I will introduce the structure and organisation of CrossAsia, the requirements for members, the licensing system, and give an outlook to the above mentioned developments.

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