

News from the ANU library

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1. Online access to the Siku quanshu available at ANU Menzies Library

On two dedicated computers, access to the online version of the Siku quanshu is available for staff and students of ANU.

2. Digitisation in progress

The ANU Library has started a digitisation project that includes the digitisation of the Xu Dishan collection. Currently, the most fragile items have been digitised.

Xu Dishan 許地山 (1893-1941) belonged to the most influential writers, researchers and philosophers in the early years of the Chinese republic. He studied at Yanjing University in Beijing as well as at Columbia University and Oxford University. He later also taught religious studies at Yanjing University, Beijing University and Qinghua University, and thus had a deep understanding of Eastern and Western literature and religious studies. His family were devout Buddhists, and this is reflected in this collection and his writings. This collection served as the religious text fundament for his own writings, which are still well known today. When Xu was appointed head of the Department of Chinese by the University of Hong Kong in 1935 he began working on reforming the Chinese curriculum, and thus became an important figure in education. He unexpectedly died in 1941, aged 48.

The collection was acquired by the renowned scholar and diplomat Charles Patrick Fitzgerald, foundation professor of Far Eastern History at ANU, in 1951 from the University of Hong Kong. As Prof Fitzgerald remembers in an interview in 1991, "I was there [in Hong Kong] for two months or more buying books and it was not too difficult because there were, fortunately, some collections which were being offered for sale by the heirs of people who'd perished in the war and one thing and another. And Hong Kong University had custody of some of these which they didn't want to keep, so I bought a whole lot from them." Luckily he acquired this one too. It formed the basis of the Asian/Chinese collection at the ANU at the time and is still a magnificent part of our rare book collection.