

American Institute for Lankan Studies

Quarterly Newsletter



5/22, Sulaiman Terrace, Colombo 5. Sri Lanka.
Tel. 94 11 2508512 tel. 94 11 4513706 Email: ails@sltnet.lk
Web: <https://www.aisls.org/>
United States Director - Dr. John Rogers
Executive Director, Colombo Center - Dr. Vagisha Gunasekara

1st Quarter 2019

January-March 2019

AILS' Pilot Digitizing Project

The STAR of ISLAM Newspaper & the Jubilee Book



AILS Executive Director, Dr. Vagisha Gunasekera delivering the keynote address – 18.1.2019

The American Institute for Lankan Studies [AILS] included a digitization initiative to preserve endangered material as part of core programming around 2017 focusing on locating, preserving, conserving, digitizing and archiving endangered material which subsequently became a major part of the AILS program activities. Consequently, AILS in collaboration with the Research, Documentation Study and Communications Committee of the Sri Lanka Malay Association [SLMA] worked closely to repair, digitize and conserve endangered historical material of the Malay community, namely; the newspaper series titled *The Star of Islam* published in Colombo during July 1939 to March 1940 and *The Jubilee Book* of the Colombo Malay Cricket Club published in February 1924 which needed extensive restoration due its deteriorating state. At the SLMA Founder's Day annual commemoration & 97th anniversary held on the 18.1.2019, Dr. Vagisha Gunasekara, Executive Director AILS delivered the keynote address titled '*Digitization and conservation of endangered historical material within the Sri Lanka Malay community and beyond*' emphasizing the importance of conservation and digitization of historical material in enabling open access to rare material in a digital age with highlights of the technical processes of repair, de-acidification, restoration and digitization.

MAIN FEATURES:

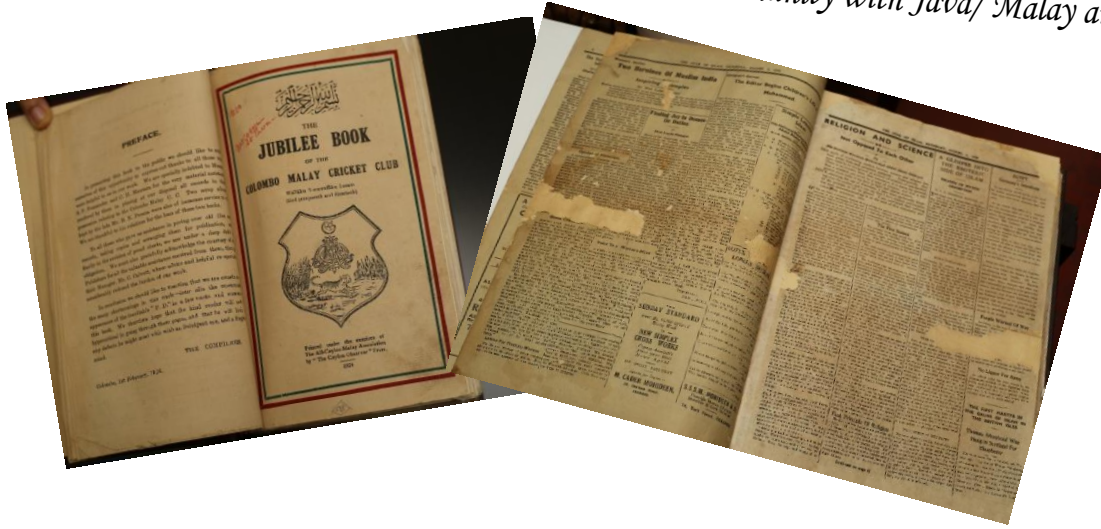
AILS Digitization Pilot Project on SLMA Newspaper *Star of Islam & Jubilee Book*

Workshop on Digitization Initiative lead by Neel Agrawal of the Center for Research Libraries 25th January, 2019

Pali Text Society Publications Donation to Rajarata University March 15, 2019

The SLMA officials present at this event extended its gratitude to AILS for the unprecedented efforts made to preserve these Malay historical materials. AILS contribution to SLMA was also covered by Sri Lanka's leading TV Channel Derana; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-TiRJBfFe0> [Watch from 19:04 to 19:38] AILS Associate Director Programming, Ramla Wahab-Salman was also actively present in the forefront of this event. These historically irreplaceable material are to be digitally hosted by the South Asia Open Archives [SAOA] from April 2019.

AILS project fulfilled conserving and preserving endangered material of historical and cultural value which will otherwise be subject to decay and be indecipherable in a very short time. Also sharing invaluable manuscripts that are not replicated and educate the world about a distinct population with a rich cultural heritage; in this instance; the Sri Lanka Malay Community, a small Muslim community with Java/ Malay ancestry.



Consequently, on 18.3.2019, the digitized manuscripts were returned to SLMA at AILS office with the participation of Maas Juragan Majid – Past President of the Malay Association and the owner of the digitized work; Star of Islam and



Jubilee Book of the Colombo Malay Cricket Club, Taslim Rahaman – President, SLMA, Ms. Mahina Bongso – Research, Documentation Study and Management Committee [SLMA], Palitha Kumarapperuma - Conservator of the material, Chamila Prasanna – Head of Operations, Sanje Lanka, M. Kumarapperuma- Document Repairing Specialist, together with AILS staff; Dr. Vagisha Gunasekera – Executive Director, Ms. Ramla Wahab-Salman – Associate Director Programming, Ms. Deepthi Guneratne – Associate Director Administration, Ms. Crystal Baines – Associate Director Programming and

Digitization and Ms. Sharmini Nagendran – Programme Officer.

AILS WORKSHOP ON DIGITIZATION INITIATIVES FOR COLLECTIONS OF HISTORICAL MATERIAL IN SRI LANKA – 25.1.2019

AILS organized a workshop on digitization initiatives for collection of historical material in Sri Lanka in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Neel Agrawal from the South Asia Open Archives [SAOA], administered by the Centre for Research Libraries [CRL], was the key resource person of the workshop. Representatives of *Noolaham Foundation, Samkathana Research Centre & Archive of the Kelaniya University, University of Kelaniya on Manuscripts of Sri Lankan Malays, Main Library - University of Colombo, Sri Lanka National Archives* along with the AILS Staff participated in this workshop. Neel described the operations of SAOA and explained at length the components, initiatives and operations of CRL which is based in Chicago consisting of 250 research libraries from around the world and openly accessible to any researcher in the world. He outlined in detail, the key components of SAOA, including the objectives of creating digital contents, SAOA's technical standards, prioritizing content, cataloging and ingest, workflow, non-text materials, legal and ethical framework, making content openly accessible, expanding community and the hosting platform – JSTOR Forum. Additionally, participant presentations and Q&A Sessions were also held.



Photo: Neel Agrawal [Center] with AILS Staff and Workshop Participants - 25.1.2019



Donation of Pali Text Society Publications to Dr. [Rev]. Olganwatte Chandrasiri, Senior Lecturer and the Head of the Department of Humanities in the Rajarata University, Mihintale, Sri Lanka.



Photo: Dr. Vagisha Gunasekera handing over the Pali book packs to Dr. Rev. Olganwatte Chandrasiri - 15.3.2019

AILS donated an invaluable collection of Buddhist texts published by the Pali Text Society [PTS] to Dr. [Rev]. Olganwatte Chandrasiri, Senior Lecturer and the Head of the Department of Humanities in the Rajarata University of Sri Lanka. These texts are designated to the library of the Rajarata University located in the historic city of Mihintale in the North Central Province of Sri Lanka. This collection of great historical and educative material contains specifics that are easily not replicated and hence is of an immense value to Buddhist studies scholars - both local and foreign, as well as others seeking comprehensive Pali Buddhist Literature in an advanced category. Along with the PTS publications, *Six Tamil Lexicon Dictionaries published by the University of Madras*, were also donated to the Rajarata University. The Faculty of Social Science and Humanities at Rajarata University has five departments attached to it, namely; Department of Social Sciences, Department of Humanities, Department of Heritage Management, Department of Language and Archaeology and the Department of Environmental Management. Dr. [Rev] Olganwatte Chandrasiri was hopeful that the donated material will inspire students at Rajarata University to publish, teach, translate and share this material and engage with existing scholarly debates in Buddhist Studies.

In Quest of a True Life, *Pride and Prejudice* Story

Visit to AILS by Dr. Diane Lovell and Research Assistant Ms. Billie Schoen on 11.03.2019

Dr. Diane Lovell, Professor of History at Blinn College, Texas and her Research Assistant, Ms. Billie Schoen visited AILS during their 'mission' to Sri Lanka to research the life of the Rev. George Bisset. Her project began with her discovery in an English village of a previously unknown cache of love letters written by Bisset. Thus Dr. Lovell describes her project as a 'True Life, Pride and Prejudice Story'. Bisset was the brother in law of Robert Brownrigg, the third British Governor of Ceylon during 1815-1820. He lived with Brownrigg in the Governor's residence, and served as his personal secretary and as Colonial Chaplain. Additionally, Dr. Lovell's interest was to research on the life of Hon. Rev Thomas J. Twisleton who was in Ceylon from 1803 and was a Judge, Colonial Chaplain, and Archdeacon of Ceylon and died in Hambantota, Sri Lanka, in 1828.



Photo: Dr. Lovell and Ms. Schoen with AILS Staff

AILS Library collection was made accessible to them enabling them to obtain some of the relevant information sought. Importantly, appreciated advice and related research locations were given to them by AILS Executive Director, especially the guidelines on research facilities at the National Archives of Sri Lanka [NASL], briefly; the Record Management, Conservation and Preservation Divisions of the National Archives possess repositories of prized British period records of 1796-1947 with extensive print catalogues and card catalogues to guide the researcher. Consequently, the team Diane-Billie visited the National Archives on successive days to browse through the British era records and collected noteworthy information. Additionally, their trips to the library of the Diocese of Colombo, Wolfendhal Church, National Library, etc. with a fact-finding trip to Kandy, had yielded much sought-after information.

AILS Member Institutions

Brandeis University, Heller School for Social Policy and Management
<http://heller.brandeis.edu/sustainable-international-development/>

Brown University, Center for Contemporary South Asia
<https://watson.brown.edu/southasia/>

Bucknell University, Pennsylvania <https://www.bucknell.edu/>

Columbia University, Southern Asian Institute <https://www.sai.columbia.edu/>

Cornell University, South Asia Program <https://sap.einaudi.cornell.edu/>

Five Colleges Buddhist Studies Consortium
<https://www.fivecolleges.edu/buddhism/>

IFSA Butler Intercollegiate Sri Lanka Educational (ISLE) Program
<https://www.ifsa-butler.org/program/intercollegiate-sri-lanka-education-isle-program/>

Johns Hopkins University, Department of Anthropology
<https://anthropology.jhu.edu/>

Miami University (Ohio), Asian/Asian American Studies
<http://miamioh.edu/cas/academics/programs/aaa/>

New York University, India and South Asia Research
<https://www.southasianyu.org/>

Princeton University, Program in South Asian Studies <http://piirs.princeton.edu/sas>

Stanford University, Center for South Asia <https://southasia.stanford.edu/>

University of California-Berkeley, Institute for South Asia Studies
<https://southasia.berkeley.edu/>

University of Chicago, Department of South Asia Languages and Civilizations
<http://salc.uchicago.edu/>

University of Michigan, Center for South Asian Studies
<https://www.i.umich.edu/csas/>

University of Otago, Religious Studies <https://www.otago.ac.nz/religion/>

University of Pennsylvania, South Asia Regional Studies
<http://www.southasia.upenn.edu/>

University of Texas-Austin, South Asia Institute
<https://liberalarts.utexas.edu/southasia/>

University of Virginia, Center for South Asian Studies
<http://southasia.as.virginia.edu/>

University of Washington, South Asia Center <https://jsis.washington.edu/southasia/>

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Center for South Asia
<https://southasia.wisc.edu/>

Wake Forest University, Middle East and South Asia Program
<http://mesas.wfu.edu/>

Yale University, South Asia Council <https://macmillan.yale.edu/>



A fishing boat at Mutwall, Ceylon: 1880 - 1905

Editor: Dr. Vagisha Gunasekera
Compiled by: Sharmini Nagendran
~ April 2019 ~