

SOAS Digital Library

Collections

This document outlines structures for the presentation of SOAS Digital Library collections.

Structure Notes

SobekCM, the technology that in 2013 founds SOAS Digital Library, supports multiple collection levels, including collections and infinite levels of sub-collections. A lower level rolls up into the next highest level. Collections and sub-collections are coded in metadata. Additionally, SobekCM supports a Google-like cross-collections search on entry to the SOAS Digital Library.

Collections and sub-collections may be exposed or hidden ("*dark*"). Dark collections are those with access restrictions or containing embargoed content. There may eventually be several types of dark collection. Some will be restricted to Administrative access by the Digital Library's administrators, others to group access as defined in Active Directory, and yet others may require membership of a subscription group.

Each defined collection/sub-collection requires a collection narrative, collection code, and two graphical elements: a collection banner and a collection logo. In addition to defining a collection, narratives and graphics may also acknowledge donors, granting agencies and other benefactors.

SobekCM also supports the nebulous idea of conceptual Super-Collection, known within SobekCM as 'Collection Group'. This is a grouping of collections that only appears on the Digital Library's initial page as a way of visually grouping what might otherwise be a long list of collections. "World Collections" and "Topical Collections" for example. See, <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/>.

Any given resource in SobekCM may be assigned to one or more collection/sub-collection, depending upon the nature of the resource.

Outline as Precept

An outline of collections serves several purposes, none of which can be forgotten and all of which should be exploited to both help the SOAS Digital Library serve its purpose and grow.

First, collections exist to help our users find their way, to search only the most relevant material. As SOAS collections grow, this will become increasingly important. In addition to collections, SobekCM gives the user the ability to filter query results by language, country, subject, etc.

Second, collections exist for the reason a peacock has feathers: to attract content-development and technology partners, as well as, to attract donors and impress granting agencies. A collection's launch is an opportunity not just to show off our wonderful collections, but to be entrepreneurial as well. It affords opportunity:

- to RECOGNIZE our benefactors, including SOAS Executive Board and HEFCE;
- to INVITE journalists to document our achievements and to spread the word;
- to ASK academic staff and students to step forward to tell us, *if not to demonstrate for us*, how digital collections will be used in teaching and research, *and*, how research product comes back in turn into *SOAS Research Online*;
- to MAKE appropriate communities — whether national, ethnic or professional — aware of our work, *and*, in locations targeted for SOAS student recruitment, to STUDY at SOAS;
- to MAKE our competitors envious, *and* INVITE them to join us in projects that strengthen SOAS further; and, certainly not least,
- to CONGRATULATE ourselves for work well done.

Every item entering SOAS Digital Library, except those held in certain dark collections, is accessible from a basic search box on the Digital Library's home page, whether or not the collection(s) to which it belongs is live. No collection should go "live" until it has a development plan, substantial holdings and a launch plan.

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Digital Collections come about for all sorts of reasons. Perhaps academic staff requires a public domain resource for teaching. Maybe, the resource was created through the Disability Scanning Service. It may have been donated. However digital resources are acquired, their presentation should not be allowed to reflect disorganization or to suggest half-hearted effort. A digital collection that goes somewhere, it is a safe bet, has had a plan for getting there. Without development plans, we risk becoming bogged down with work that we can ill afford to take. Like a traditional library development plan, a digital library development plan needs to identify stakeholders, resources to be collected, and research methods. A digital library plan, however, may need to devote more forward-thinking to development, particularly issues of funding. A published plan suggests to our potential benefactors that we do, indeed, know how to get where we want to be, that we are capable of fulfilling their investment.

A development plan should begin to enumerate opportunities for granting and case-statements for use by the Development Office in developing donors. Periodically updated development opportunities should be brief, engaging business plans that offer alumni ready means of 'giving back' to their institution. Development plans should also include outreach elements to our potential grant partners and supporters: academic programmes elsewhere and the communities from which resources originated.

SUBSTANTIAL HOLDINGS

A collection holding a handful of objects risks appearing to be a bijou project, a flash-in-the-pan. It risks appearing to be stagnant just as it shoots out of the gate. The user could very well decide that there is no reason to return to a small collection. Careful consideration should be given to the number, type and quality of resources required to launch a digital collection.

Project planning should always be based on having completed a small, representative prototype and, at least, one plan revision. Donors and funders are attracted to success; but on first ask, it is better to describe the planning process than to launch a collection based on the prototype.

A substantial collection is usually big; but, it can also be small. The sub-collection of dictionaries accompanying the *Islamic Manuscripts Gallery*, for example, is only five volumes. They are important, fairly lengthy tomes, each accurately converted into accurate, searchable text.

A LAUNCH PLAN

Launch plans should be tailored to build positive publicity and to both thank and attract donors. Launch plans should feature class-room uses and opportunities for advanced studies at SOAS. Launch events are as much about attracting new students as making current students aware of their School's resources.

Super-Collections

Super-collections, also known as Collection Groups, include:

- **Archives & Special Collections**
- **Geographic Regions**
- **Disciplines**
- **Special Formats**

and

- **SOAS Repositories**

Collections & Sub-Collections

Typography

Names given in all caps, below, are those of **Super-Collections**. **Collection** and **Sub-Collection** names are given in bold face. Other information and collection references are bulleted.

ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Francis Light

Fürer-Haimendorf Collection

Islamic Manuscripts Online

Islamic Manuscripts Gallery

- Currently known as the *Yale-SOAS Islamic Manuscripts Gallery* (<http://www.library.yale.edu/ysimg/>). Given a new name to project growth beyond the original project.
 - Initially, the collection will hold the SOAS content included in the Yale-SOAS project.
 - With permissions [to be secured], the collection will also hold metadata and URLs for the Yale content included in the project.
NB This becomes a model for incorporating remote digital content of interest to SOAS through OAI-PMH harvesting.

Old Kanembu Islamic Manuscripts

- This is the project of Dr. Bondarev and Dr. Jagger in collaboration with colleagues at the Universität Hamburg. Contents will be ingested directly into the SOAS Digital Library.

Swahili Manuscripts

- While this collection holds the five digitised resources of *Swahili Manuscripts Online* (<http://www.swahilimanuscripts.soas.ac.uk/>), this is a distinct collection holding additional Swahili manuscripts.

Yahya Ali Omar Collection

NB The collection's several copyright issues must be resolved.

J.P. Mills Collection

Missionary Archives

London Missionary Society

David Livingstone Papers

Eric Liddell Papers

Robert Morrison Papers and Library

English Presbyterian Mission Archives

Methodist Missionary Society Archives

GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

- Countries are classified into regions in accord with the SOAS classmarks registry. Specific geographic locations may be placed in multiple regions as reasonably necessary to deal with ambiguity, history, and overlapping content.
- Resource metadata should endeavor to provide the most detailed geographic and temporal information as is possible. Where possible provide the deepest level of geographic information available. Users are often specific to locality.

Africa

Americas & the Caribbean

Central Asia

East Asia

Europe

Middle East

Pacific Islands, Oceania & Australasia

South Asia

South East Asia

- Regions are listed above are given in the order (*alphabetical*) preferred by SobekCM's Tree View. Actual presentation on a SOAS Digital Library home page could be given in any order designated by SOAS librarians. Asian regions, for example, might be grouped together. Regions less prominent within SOAS research (e.g., the Americas) might be displayed at the bottom of a regional list. A graphical presentation, for example, might utilise a clickable world map rather than textual labels.

DISCIPLINES

Anthropology

Art & Archaeology

Development Studies

Migration & Diaspora

Economics, Finance & Management

Film & Media Studies

Gender Studies

History

Linguistics and Language Studies

Law

Literature

Music

Politics

removal of *Politics* from the structure still leaves room for subsequent reintroduction

Religions

SPECIAL FORMATS

- These are collections of specific, highly requested format types requiring special display technologies.

Artworks & Artefacts

Maps

Newspapers

Photographs

Sound & Moving Images

This structure leaves room for purely digital special formats with special display technologies, e.g., Games, Virtual Reality, etc., as well as future special formats not yet created.

SOAS REPOSITORIES

- Housing the intellectual property of the School and its staff
- Many of these collections are presently supported under other technologies. Should these be integrated into SOAS Digital Library, integration will occur only after other collections have been migrated off of the Digital Info site.

Hans Rausing Endangered Languages Programme

- a hook to the Programme, this collection holds metadata and URLs to resources outside SOAS Digital Library.

SOAS Electronic Theses

SOAS Past Exam Papers

- <https://mysoas.soas.ac.uk/students/pastexams/default.aspx>.

SOAS Research Online

- <http://eprints.soas.ac.uk/>

[TBA]

- Intended to collect resources created through the course of doing business, this is a set of resources overlooked by SOAS Research Online.
- Institutional memory, much of which is born digital and otherwise lost, some of which has research value in its own right.
- Departments, Centres, etc. will be given secure access to deposit their own content.
- May or may not migrate or incorporate **SOAS Research Online**.

Most institutions will have one collection that represents the sum of what, here, is both *SOAS Research Online* and the TBA collection.

SOAS has a well established repository for its research output, SOAS Research Online. This repository on the E-Prints digital library system currently supports deposit well and search reasonably well.

Current theory of operation is that SOAS Research Online should (1) eventually migrate to the SobekCM system, where its holdings can be cross searched against other digital library holdings, but that it should (2) not do so until both (a) other digitised content not currently supported is online and (b) there is agreement that SobekCM will support SOAS Research Online as now supported.