



Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University



Nation Building through Information Sharing

ABOUT ACKU

The Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University (ACKU), formerly the ACBAR Resource and Information Centre (ARIC), as envisioned by Professor Louis Dupree, was established in Peshawar (Pakistan) in 1989. Professor Louis Dupree often stated that his ambition was to understand Afghanistan “from one cell up” and during the 1970s, the Dupree home in Kabul was filled with Afghan and international scholars and students exchanging knowledge and ideas. During the war years, Louis gained new insights while traveling across the border from Peshawar; meanwhile, Nancy Hatch Dupree kept track of happenings among the world’s largest refugee population. Here was history in the making, a crucial component of Afghan heritage that desperately needed to be recorded. Louis then launched the idea of a resource centre that would preserve information from a wide variety of sources on every aspect of this traumatic period. Following Professor Louis’s death in 1989, Nancy picked up the reins.



Photo: Time Magazine

In 2005, Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, then Chancellor of the Kabul University, provided temporary space in the University’s Main Library. In 2007, President Karzai authorized development funds to be made available from the Government’s budget for the construction of a new facility at the University Campus.

In 2007, the Dupree Foundation was established in New York to support the program in Afghanistan (<http://dupreefoundation.org>).



On 27 March 2013 ACKU inaugurated the new building, located at the center of the Kabul University Campus. The new facility is funded largely by the Afghan government with some contributions from foreign donations. A new memorandum of understanding was signed with the Ministry of Higher Education in January 2013 providing for ACKU to operate independently inside the University Campus.

Professor Dupree's idea to preserve information and documents pertaining to the crucial years of Afghanistan's modern history resulted in collections which today number over 80,000 items. ACKU's collections—in Dari, Pashto, English and other languages—are largely generated from the Afghan government, UN agencies, NGOs, international scholars and observers. These consist of practical works on health, agricultural practices, political

analyses, unique documents charting the struggle for women's rights, recent laws, rare mujahidin publications, newspapers and periodicals, cultural heritage documents, and many works of Afghan literature. Today, the Center is regarded as the richest source of information on Afghanistan in the region.

The Centre's overall goals are to facilitate research and enhance the culture of reading, through its ACKU's Box Library Extension (ABLE) outreach project. Hence, ACKU aims to contribute to ongoing state building processes by providing access to knowledge.

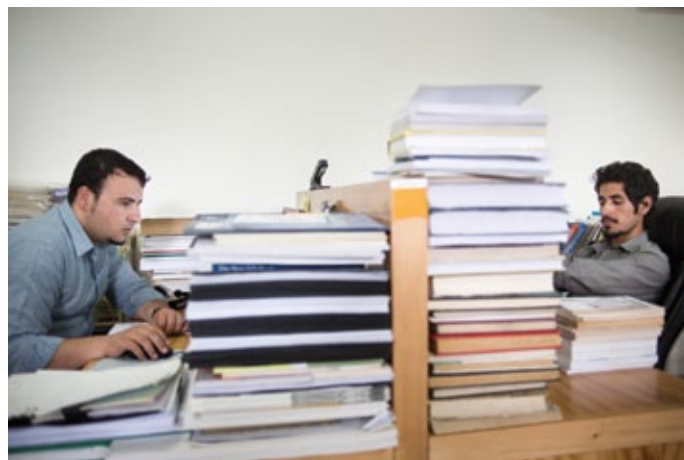
ACKU is focused on three main thematic areas:

- Expanding the ACKU collections
- ACKU's Box Library Extension, (ABLE)
- Communication and outreach

LIBRARY

Acquisitions

ACKU's collection benefits from continuous acquisitions. While ACKU systematically purchases monographs and serials from national and international markets, a significant proportion of the collections comes from private Afghan and international institutional and individual donations.



Photos: Joel van Houdt

LIBRARY

Cataloguing

All material (monograph and serial in all languages) acquired for the Library's collections are catalogued in conformity with accepted bibliographical standards and entered with the Library of Congress call numbers and authorized subject headings according to Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules 2 (AACR2). Catalogue records are entered to the ACKU online Bibliographic Database on MARC21. The Library gives high priority to making its collections readily accessible in the library's online catalogue or as part of the ACKU KOHA database in the Reading Room.

ACKU plans to catalogue 12,000 monographs, and serials from the Afghan market; 1200 monographs from the international market; 80,000 issues of the Afghan newspapers by subscription and purchase of historical newspaper collections that will be acquired in the period 2014 – 2017. In addition, some 8,000 non-copyrighted PDF documents downloaded from the internet will be catalogued, classified and added to ACKU's in-house digital library.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CATALOGUE

Collection of the posters from the Afghan-Russian war



LIBRARY

Digitization

Currently over 800,000 pages are scanned, while 4,000 volumes of books are accessible at ACKU's digital website (www.afghandata.org), which is jointly maintained with the University of Arizona. ACKU plans to have 65% of its collection digitized by 2017, and a total number of 480,000 pages of its collection accessible via

internet in the period of 2014-2017. In partnership with Afghanistan's Ministry of Higher Education, ACKU will share its collections with universities in Herat, Kandahar, Mazar and Nangrahar, where ACKU will assign representatives to support students to access the online collection.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DIGITIZED COLLECTION

Afghan women in the XX century (from left to right): Royal ladies with Prince Amanullah in 1910; Three judges in the 1970s; Afghan model posing in the Hindu Kush in the 1980s; Ariana Airlines air hostesses in 1979.



LIBRARY

Reading Room and Research

ACKU's Reading Room accommodates Afghan students and researchers with its current 38 computer stations connected to ACKU's KOHA database, with the search capacity in three languages (Dari, Pashto, English). Currently, some 1,000 students are registered users of the ACKU's KOHA database.

ACKU represents an invaluable resource for Afghan and international researchers, many of whom continue to use the collection on a regular basis. The new building and its facilities are used as a platform for research for both, visiting and domestic scholars. Fostering research skills among Afghans complement the academic function of Kabul University.



Photos: Joel van Houdt



LIBRARY Archives

ACKU holds the region's most extensive collection of primary resources on Afghanistan, including:

- Extensive data on the political history of the past three decades covering the period of Soviet occupation (1979-1989), the civil war of the early 1990s, and the Taliban era (1996-2001)
- A large collection of reference works covering all periods of Afghan history and all aspects of the cultural dynamics of the society
- Extensive data on the Afghan refugee crisis of the past three decades—the world's largest refugee crisis in modern history
- Extensive (and in some instances unique) collections of Jihad and Taliban-era publications
- Rare audio-visual materials on the threatened folk culture of Afghanistan, including those collected during the 1970s by specialists such as Louis Dupree, Margaret Mills, and Lorraine Sakata
- 97 high quality mounted prints of sketches and photographs executed by prominent British artists and photographers, taken during the First (1839-1842) and Second (1878-1880) Anglo-Afghan Wars. In addition 25 mounted photographs of contemporary Kabul by David Gill
- Afghan-Russian correspondence throughout the XX century. These include correspondence between King Amanullah and Vladimir Ilyich Lenin and other correspondences through the reign of King Zahir to exchanges between Hamid Karzai and Vladimir Putin
- A photo collection of over four thousand prints and slides featuring Afghanistan from the nineteenth century through to the present
- Approximately 500 maps of Afghanistan and the region in various scales



The ACKU's collections include approximately one million pages of grey literature and unpublished material on the history, political, social and economic situation of Afghanistan. Much of the material covers the Afghan Civil War, Taliban era, and the U.S. intervention. While most of the collections are in a variety of Western languages (primarily English, but also French, German, and Swedish, as well as Arabic and Urdu), 45% of the collections are in Pashto, Dari and other Afghan languages.

Approximately 50-60% of the holdings are non-commercial materials produced by Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Afghanistan governmental ministries and institutions, the Mujahedeen groups, the Taliban, United Nations (UN) agencies, including those with active refugee programs in Pakistan during the 1980s and '90s, and current development projects undertaken in Afghanistan since 2001.

The collections also feature monographs, serials, newspapers, and a sizable number of reference materials that cover Afghan history from the pre-historic through the war periods and social upheaval.

ABLE

ACKU's Box Library Extension

Since 1996, ACKU has reached out to Afghans outside of Kabul through the ACKU Box Library Extension (ABLE), which aims to spread knowledge and encourage a culture of reading by making available reading material through small lending libraries. Managed by local community custodians (including teachers, NGO staff, shopkeepers and mullahs) these 'box libraries' contain titles on a range of topics including history, the environment, home management, good health practices, the use of computers, and dictionaries. ABLE has supplied more than 243,400 books to more than 218 schools and community libraries. Some 200 libraries managed by NGOs follow the ABLE model. Some 141 books (in Dari and Pashtu) for new literates have been commissioned from Afghan authors and published, on subjects including mother-child care, agriculture, animal welfare, Islam, etc. ABLE is a community-based initiative, interested in social dynamics, to which it responds by providing specially written reading materials that address community interests.



Photo: Mashall Samsoor





The expansion of ABLE services will entail the establishment of 40 new mobile libraries between 2014-17, along with updating of the 218 existing ABLE libraries with new materials. The new material will

be produced as in-house publications or be purchased from commercial suppliers. ABLE will be commissioning an additional 50 titles over the period of four years to enrich its body of easy-to-read ABLE books.

OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATIONS

Events

Book Launch: Medico-surgical Challenges in Afghanistan (26 June 2013)

Dr. Munir Mosamin, Professor of Medicine and author of numerous medical books, writes of his experiences during 40 years of medical practice in his new book entitled *Medico-surgical Challenges in Afghanistan*.

Panel Discussion: Civil Society- Peace and Expectation (23 June 2013)

A panel discussion on "Afghanistan Civil Society - Peace and Expectations, in collaboration with the Italian Civil Society Network - Afghana.



Photo: David Gill

Lecture: Methodology of Research

(5 June 2013)

Delivered in style by Dr. Faridullah Bezhan, author, researcher and professor at Monash University (Australia), the lecture focused on the primary steps needed to write a research proposal, an academic paper or a thesis.

Public Talk: Thousands of Untold Stories

(29 May 2013)

David Gill, journalist, photographer and film maker, spoke of "Thousands of Untold Stories," drawing from his multimedia project entitled Kabul: A City at Work, that documents stories from the lives of ordinary and extraordinary Afghans in Kabul.

Poetry Reading: Afghanistan's first ever open Poetry Slam or Sher Jangi

(24 April 2013)

The first ever Open Poetry Slam, was held on 24 April 2013. Over 60 young Afghans of different backgrounds, ethnicity and gender registered to perform their poetry on this slam. ACKU, GOETHE INSTITUTE and the Sound Central Festival jointly organized the event.

Video Conferences: Afghan-US student dialogue

(11 April 2013)

In its first video-teleconference, ACKU brought together the Kabul University students, and students of Arizona University.

Public Lecture: On the architecture of the ACKU building

(6 April 2013)

Presentation of the building's architects and engineers, aimed to explain the design of ACKU's building. The building is a rare modern reinterpretation of traditional Afghan design and building techniques. It brings together the best of Afghanistan's design heritage and natural resources: the wood is fragrant cedar from eastern Kunar province; the Afghan natural stone from Maidan Wardak defines the exteriors. The inner courtyard is the agora (*Áyopá*) of the Campus.

Inauguration of ACKU's New Facility

(27 March 2013)

A distinguished gathering of notables who contributed to the development of ACKU attended the opening ceremony addressed by Ashraf Ghani. The audience of 190 included the diplomatic, academic and civil society elites of Kabul.

Lecture and Book Launch: William Dalrymple on the First Anglo-Afghan War

(4 March 2013)

Renowned novelist, William Dalrymple, launched his latest novel on the First Anglo-Afghan War entitled Return of the King. He elaborated on the importance of the research undertaken for his work.

OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATONS

Conference facility

ACKU's new premises offer a state-of-the-art auditorium, an exhibition space and a couple of smaller conference rooms suitable for public events, debates, cultural activities and the like.

ACKU plans to conduct 48 public events on social, economic, cultural and political topics over the period of 2014-2017 for its pri-

mary target groups - students, faculty members and researchers. It will also hold workshops, conferences and video dialogues with students abroad, based on public interest and demand.

With a seating capacity of 200, the ACKU auditorium has the potential to reach out at least 200 beneficiaries, at any given event.



Photo: David Gill

OUTREACH AND COMMUNICATONS

Forthcoming publications

To strengthen the outreach component, ACKU plans to publish a journal to highlight the research papers produced at ACKU. The aim of the journal is to encourage and inspire young researchers, by creating an outlet through which they can showcase their academic work and achievements. Detailed plans for this undertaking are being developed at the moment.

In the period 2014-17, ACKU will expand the partnerships with existing research organizations (in country and abroad) to enhance research skills of the Afghan students. Bringing the 'best

practices' in qualitative and quantitative research to the Afghan students, and generating research papers from the material in the ACKU collection will be key priorities in the period. With the help and guidance of either local or international research institutions, ACKU will develop a course on basic research methodology and will engage lecturers to conduct short-term programs for Afghan students. The participants of these short-term programs will be assigned to conduct short research papers, using the ACKU's collection.



Photo: Joel van Houdt



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