

Report on the workshop on Digitisation of Resources: Developing the British Library's India Strategy (20 - 21 September 2010, Bangalore)

Background: The British Library (BL)'s digitization initiative was first conceptualized in July 2007. In that year, the British Library Board approved an International Engagement Strategy that commits the BL to a large-scale digitization of its major collections, and at the same time to partner other collections in danger of being lost. Over the last year, the BL has proposed the need to devise an India Strategy in order to digitize its South Asia collections. The framework for developing the India Strategy has taken shape over the last few months, in the form of a BL and Higher Education Cell (HEC) collaboration.

About the British Library: The British Library, London, is one of the world's greatest research libraries. Its collections contain over 150 million items, and their unique breadth and diversity makes them a globally unrivalled asset. The India Office Records inherited by the BL constitute the single largest resource for Asian studies anywhere. The material originating from India includes 500,000 volumes of printed books in all South Asian languages, 70,000 volumes of official Indian publications in the India Office Records, 275,000 volumes of the archives of the East India Company, India Office and Burma Office, 30,000 manuscripts, 30,000 prints and drawings, 200,000 photographs and 105,000 maps.

About the HEC: The HE Cell, housed at the Centre for the Study of Culture and Society (CSCS), Bangalore, was incubated by the Tata Trusts in 2007. It has since then built a significant national network of higher education institutions as part of its effort to enable sectoral change. The HEC has been approached by the BL to anchor its India Strategy because of its strong partner network in the country, which can bring together: (1) major public and private archives; (2) key University departments capable of housing the archived material and using it for teaching and research purposes; and (3) technological partners capable of high-volume digitization.

Agenda for the Workshops: A series of workshops will be collaboratively organized by the BL and HEC with the aim of developing a sustainable ten-year plan, which will include partnerships with other institutions for achieving key digitization targets.

Report of the first workshop, 20-21 September, Bangalore

The first of these workshops took place on September 20 and 21, 2010 in Bangalore. The workshop brought together Indian and UK research partners to discuss the India strategy for digitizing the BL resources.

Aim of the workshop: The participants in the workshop were invited to reflect on the daunting and challenging task before them: that of **identifying a critical mass of material for digitization** from the BL's vast resources, and debate the criteria for prioritizing such material. The aim was of the discussions was to lead us in the direction of identifying researchable projects which would be specific to **region, period** and **theme**. The criteria for identifying such projects could include:

- Conservation of endangered archival material in Indian repositories and the possibility of supplementing such material with BL resources
- Ready availability of material to work with

- Institutional arrangements that would facilitate access to material
- Material that would help establish research collaborations between Indian and UK institutions.
- Material that would support curriculum development and enhancement in Indian and British universities

While deciding on the projects, the modalities of implementation would be a crucial factor. The BL-HEC workshops aim to facilitate:

- Possible collaborations between national and regional, public and private archives and libraries in India, which would enable the digitization of materials available in their holdings
- Exploration of local and international funding options in order to sustain the initiative and upscale it
- Technological partnerships which would enable high-volume quality digitization
- Generating consensus on the technical standards of dissemination and storage of the digitized resources.

With these aims in view, the first workshop brought together Indian University academicians, technological partners, institutional heads such as the Director of the National Library, Kolkata, and UK representatives from the BL and the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC), to initiate this discussion across the various levels of partnerships—research, institutional and technological. The workshop also sought to set the agenda for and plan the logistics of future workshops.

The discussions on 20 and 21 September covered the following:

- An introduction to the BL's digitisation initiative and its potential impact
- Criteria for identifying material for digitisation
- An introduction to the academic, institutional and technological partners represented at the workshop and the potential for collaboration
- An overview of the BL's South Asia collections
- Possibilities and obstacles in digitisation
- Thinking ahead: strategy for the year 2010 -11 and thereafter

I. IMPACT AND TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL OF DIGITISATION

Joanna Newman spoke of the impact that the BL's digitisation initiative would have in light of the magnitude and salience of the BL's collections. The BL houses everything that has ever been published in the UK. Its largest audience is formed by research communities across the arts and humanities, and science and technology.

Digitising the resources of the BL is a logical imperative in the digital age. It would allow for greater access to the BL's materials, without the necessity of physical presence at the library. It would also respond to the needs and capacities of the present generation of digitally literate researchers that the Google age has engendered. Finally, digitisation would enable new research thematics to emerge, as a greater mass of material becomes accessible to more researchers who bring their own lenses of investigation to it. A past example of this potential of digitisation to generate research areas is the Old Bailey records online, and the fresh research areas it made possible.

II. CRITERIA FOR IDENTIFYING MATERIAL FOR DIGITISATION

The following recommendations were made:

- **New thematic areas:**

The concerns of historical scholarship have changed over the years. Historiography's focus in the 1960s and 70s was economic and political history. Since the 80s, the turn has been towards social and cultural history, including histories of gender, subaltern studies and so on. The new thematic areas should guide the identification of research projects.

- **Curriculisability:**

The digitised material should eventually be used for teaching in schools, undergraduate and postgraduate institutions, in order to open up new areas of enquiry and encourage future researchers.

- **Digital Knowledge Exchange:**

Possibilities of digital knowledge exchange need to be explored. This will enable a combining of archival materials in the UK and in India. The participants spoke of the existing digitisation initiatives in India that they were familiar with. The National Library has its own digitisation programme, which has ICT support. The School of Cultural Texts and Records has an initiative to digitise early printed books in Bengal. The Mewar Ramayana digitisation project funded by the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust (SDTT) is already underway. CSSSC has a visual resource archive. The appendix lists the existing digitisation initiatives in India that were identified during the discussions.

- **To go beyond India:**

One recommendation was to digitise the BL's collections so as to enlarge the scope of research to one of colonial studies, wherein India features geographically as a subset. History writing in India is largely India-centric. Digital knowledge exchange needs to be thought in more creative ways, so as to encompass the China and South Africa archive.

Also, there is much mid-19th century material that traverses the ocean: emigration records and so on, which are significant to diaspora studies.

- **The hidden archive:**

Often repositories in India [such as the National Archives of India (NAI), New Delhi] only have the records of the higher officials, e.g. the Governor-General's records. The district and village level records are absent. If these records can be digitised and made available, the voices of the smaller officials — the District Collector, the thanedar— and how they saw their official capacity will open up a fascinating field of investigation.

Even newspaper collections in major repositories are of metropolitan newspapers. The digitisation of local newspapers would enable new research on the public sphere in colonial India.

Likewise, there has been an emphasis on land records so far. Research interests have shifted from land-bound histories to mobile histories: to writing on rivers, forests, mountains, and their imbrication in environmental issues. The archive needs to keep up. The BL's interest in the meteorological project on climate change could tie in with this.

● **Regional language resources:**

There is an initiative of this name under the HEC. The HEC's large mandate is to incubate new ideas for the entire sector of Higher Education and produce a transformation therein. With this in view, the HEC works with collaborating institutions to develop new resources for students. Such resources include regional language materials, such as private collections of individuals. These materials are valuable for mapping social and cultural histories and produce an archive of non-hegemonic records, in an intellectual landscape which has been dominated by Marathi and Bengali resources.

The aim in collating the archive of regional language material is to go beyond mere translation and bring the material into a curricularisable format. It is this feeding into curricula that gives the initiative a research orientation that the enterprise of translation does not have. The initiative attempts to infuse a research oriented culture in the regional language academia by enthusing UG and PG scholars to marshal material and use it in innovative ways.

The BL's India strategy could focus towards digitising and building an archive in other languages, such as Kannada or Tamil.

III. POSSIBILITIES AND OBSTACLES IN DIGITISATION

The following recommendations were made, in light of the possibilities and obstacles that digitisation entailed:

● **Cataloguing:**

The recommendation was made that along with digitisation, we need cataloguing projects to prevent replication and to know what material is located where. Many repositories do not have electronic catalogues. Thus, there is a need to work with state archives in order to build digital catalogues. Catalogues of smaller libraries, newspaper collections and legal records need to be assembled too. Legal records, especially, are not easily accessible.

Even when digital catalogues exist, they are not of the same standard. They need to be converted to a software that is compatible; otherwise they are not compatible with each other.

Unified catalogues would make a difference in thinking about local histories. This would mean working with local history departments and their students, and exploring local funding options.

State archives can be very difficult to work with. Some are more open than others, and none come under central jurisdiction. This difficulty made initiatives like Archives and Access work with private institutions instead, and collate metadata.

It was recommended that cataloguing and digitisation initiatives should proceed simultaneously.

● **Reunification of material / Completion of collections:**

There was a debate as to whether the focus of digitisation should be to complete the archive, i.e. to 'marry', as it were, the UK archival material with the complementary Indian collections. One suggestion was that completion should not be a guiding principle for digitisation, rather research oriented projects should be. Yet, it was pointed out, research agendas change, and what we may identify as important research projects today may not remain the same many years hence. Thus, our current research questions cannot be a guiding principle. Eventually, archiving is about completion; to not leave chunks undigitised for later. So far, there has been a hotchpotch approach to digitisation.

● **The politics of acquisition:**

Archiving is a political act. Apart from the politics of selection (of material) in assembling a digital archive, there is also the politics of acquisition. There are several existing digitisation initiatives at present. For instance, the University of Chicago has digitised material, which is made available to a consortium. The BL's India strategy has to also be about intelligent bargaining with existing digitised archives.

The BL has contracts with large digitisation initiatives like that of the University of Chicago. These contracts should be revisited and renegotiated, in light of the present South Asia initiative. The BL's South Asia initiative would have leverage in such negotiations.

In response to this recommendation, the BL representatives said that these past contracts could not be renegotiated. Yet, they had to be. The BL delegates were asked what the criteria were by which access agreements had been fortified. That allowed the American consortium to define the conditions under which access has been delimited. Such contracts could not be an excuse to disallow open access forever.

It was recommended that the BL provide a list of their existing collaborations with other digitisation projects.

● **The politics of access:**

Many delegates raised the question of access, which often gets ignored in the emphasis on digitisation. Digitisation and maintenance of digitised material does not

necessarily translate into access. They recommended that digitised material should be available through free and open access, online. Students researching history in India often lack access to archival sources. Students in metropolitan Universities like JNU and DU are better-placed because they are digitally literate and have the opportunity to apply for support within the University and visit the BL. There are, however, pre-digital students in remoter locations whose research is inhibited because they cannot even travel to the National Archives in Delhi, leave alone to the BL. Prof. Bhattacharya spoke of his own efforts to bridge this gap by putting forth a proposal to the UGC to digitise material and enable universal free access.

Free access would also mean lower costs, institutionally, since one institution need not bear the entire cost of putting up material online.

● **Legal obstacles: Copyright and Intellectual Property Issues:**

The holdings of libraries and archives are protected by copyright. Thus, these libraries would provide bibliographic and reprographic services for a fee, but the document itself would stay within copyright.

There are several such legal mechanisms to limit access. The presentations made by Aparna Balachandran and Yogananda C.S. spoke of the practical difficulties their digitisation initiatives have encountered in obtaining open access.

In their efforts, the **Archives and Access** initiative have often found that local libraries were open to the idea of digitising their catalogues and making them available online, as this would attract more users to their collections. They were hesitant, however, to digitise their material and make the full text available online since that would nullify their reason for existing at all. Users would not need to visit the library physically if the material was all available online, free of cost.

Aparna also pointed out that negotiation with smaller private libraries was a trust-building exercise. Many of them do not have digitisation initiatives or even catalogues. Their collections are often crumbling. These repositories (of which the initiative has a list) need help. One possibility is that their collections can be digitised and put into a format that is compatible to the BL's and linked up. Unities in terms of region, period and themes could be identified.

Yogananda C.S. has been involved in several local digitisation initiatives. Some of the material (such as the Rig Veda's treatises on astronomy) that he has helped digitise is available online, some (such as the volumes of the Journal of the Bombay Natural History Society) is in the form of DVDs which are available for sale. The appendix has a list of these projects. Prof. Yogananda's special interest is in Kannada materials, given Kannada's systematic print history. He is now interested in digitising the Legislative Assembly debates in Karnataka.

Prof. Yogananda offered an insight into how costs and copyright issues were addressed in his personal efforts at digitisation. Free open access of digitised material comes attached with the costs of digitisation. Mysore University got past this hurdle by announcing a call for proposals for digitisation. Companies who responded would digitise the material at their costs and have rights to sell the material for two years,

after which the copyright would revert to Mysore University, and the material would be available on the University website, free of cost.

Further on the question of intellectual property rights, he alerted the participants to a global situation where big players like JSTOR and Springer were acquiring collections from across the world — from the Indian Academy of Sciences, for instance — and then making these materials available at a high cost.

IV. OVERVIEW OF BL'S COLLECTIONS

Oliver Urquhart Irvine, who is Head of Asian and African Studies at the BL gave a detailed overview of the BL's South Asia collections. The power-point presentation, which comprehensively summarises the various categories of collections and their magnitude, can be accessed here:

V. THE INDIA STRATEGY: SHORT TERM VISION, 2010-11. LONG TERM VISION

The SRTT grant is of a year's duration. The SRTT's expectations for this year are that the BL-HEC would devise a strategy for the long term and get a few projects off the ground. Future grants would depend on the results shown in the first year. It should be noted that the current SRTT grant does not support any actual conservation of material.

With the view to attaining visible results, **three pilot projects have been identified for this year: the Mewar Ramayana project, the Early Bengali Books project and the project on climate change.**

In addition to seeing the pilot projects through, this year the BL-HEC need to decide on future projects. The consultants at the workshop were invited to make suggestions for identifying projects based upon their financial sustainability and possible research collaborations across India and the UK. By the end of year, we need a concrete strategy and plan. Once this grant period is over, the Trust will choose what they want to support; they may choose to support one project of those that we propose by the year-end. Thus, further SRTT support will depend on how the India strategy shapes up.

VI. IMPLEMENTING THE INDIA STRATEGY

• Pilot Projects:

The **Mewar Ramayana** project is being funded by the SDTT. This project to digitise **early printed Bengali books** is covered by an MoU signed with the Ministry of Culture. No separate funding for this project was mentioned in the MoU. The third pilot project is the one on climate change. There is no funding as of now for this project either.

• 3 initial workshops:

Three workshops are planned to discuss the pilot projects:

1. The next workshop, which will take place in Kolkata in December 2010, will focus on the digitisation of early Bengali books.
2. In March, a workshop is proposed to discuss climate change.
3. A third workshop is planned with the NAI in Delhi, on archival sources.

Recommendations / suggestions for the workshops:

- The IISc may be a good partner in the project on climate change, since they have put together rainfall data from 1900 to 2000. Such data is of practical use to monitor climate change.
- Gautam Bhadra is working on a project on almanacs and may be a useful resource person.
- The project on climate change has an impact across disciplines. State funding could be explored for this project. The Universities of Essex and East Anglia are doing some work on meteorological change
- People involved in the Mewar Ramayana project should be part of these workshops. The Prince of Wales Museum, Mumbai is a partner in this project.
- The workshops should achieve a balance of academics, archivists / librarians and technological personnel.
- For the project on early Bengali books, it would be useful to involve the School of Cultural Texts. They would be of help in the academic part.
- The workshop on early Bengali books should also speak to non-Bengali academicians, about the digitisation of such materials and how to use them, so they can take forward these ideas in their own endeavours.
- In the workshop on archival sources, people from different parts of India who are involved in archiving initiatives should be invited, so as to persuade them to see things in a different way and engage with the possibilities of digital conservation and sharing. Thus, not merely the NAI, but smaller institutions should participate so that the provincial repositories do not feel that their interests are in conflict with those of the NAI.

A practical problem this poses is that of the language barrier. Representatives of small libraries cannot be brought to an urban location for a meeting. There would have to be smaller meetings with them. The initiative should also render people capable of becoming their own archivists.

● **Partnership with the AHRC:**

The AHRC is one of the seven research councils in the UK. The Research Councils, UK (RCUK) work together across different disciplines. Their focus is on collaborative research projects that are multidisciplinary, and have an impact on quality of life. India is a priority area for all councils and the RCUK has an office in Delhi.

One of the programmes that the AHRC is involved in is digitisation, insofar as it impacts research. Prof. Shearer West, who has been working with the AHRC for three years now, represented the institution's stake in developing the India strategy. The AHRC has funds which could flow into a research project, given its research potential and economic / social impact.

● **Identifying material for quick wins and potential research projects:**

Recommendations were made for projects which would result in quick wins, and projects with research potential. These were:

1. Digitisation of microfilms / microfiche: Digitisation of material that has already been microfilmed may be a quick way to proceed. Doubts were expressed regarding the quickness of such a win. To convert microfilm into digital material depends on factors such as the quality of the microfilm and the technology that is available to convert the microfilm to digital material. Thus, scanning the original may be a better option than to digitise microfilm, because of the state of the art technology that is available. It was decided that it would be best to proceed on a case by case basis, depending on the quality of the microfilm and technology available.

2. Proscribed collections: There was an interest in proscribed collections, which include handbills, declarations, political posters, books, pamphlets, and newspapers. These collections are in the main South Asian languages and in English. 80 % of proscribed literature is nationalist poetry, which formed a major site of mobilisation in the 20th century. In addition to the proscribed material itself, there is a file for every such record that explains why it was proscribed, etc. This is an invaluable archive for the study of the freedom struggle. The NAI could supplement this. Also, collaboration with the Chicago library could be explored to complete this archive.

3. Newspapers and periodicals: There was also interest in digitising the volumes of periodicals and newspapers that are available in all the South Asian languages and in English. These materials are scattered, and thus the attempt should also be to complete them. The BL collections are weak in this area. The complete runs of newspapers that BL has could be digitised. Teen Murti and NAI have collections of newspapers and periodicals, which have been microfilmed. They are also available in smaller repositories, e.g. The Mythic Society, Bangalore or private libraries such as that of the Basava Samithi, Bangalore. The Duke University has collections as well, which can be digitised and completed.

Some newspapers such as the Amrit Bazaar Patrika have already been digitised, completely from the late 19th century up until 1930. Likewise, some Kannada newspapers, such as the Vruttanta Patrike are available in microfilm.

Newspapers are essential to this project because they are a record of the public sphere being constituted by print, and would interest young scholars.

4. Company school paintings: This was one of the digitisation projects that had been agreed upon in the MoU between the Ministry of Culture and the BL. Delegates also suggested that paintings that illustrated Indian folk art, such as the Kalighat paintings could be digitised.

5. Vernacular tracts and books in print in the Indian languages: To begin with, the tracts / books in Indian languages that have already been microfilmed could be digitised. This project would have leverage among many constituencies because it would involve digitising of regional language resources, which would address important regional, literary and socio-historical concerns. One pilot project for this year covers early printed Bengali books. Hindi and Urdu could follow. The space for non-hegemonic languages should not be lost.

The National Library, Kolkata had previously digitised regional language books. CSSSC, under the Ford Foundation grant, has digitised Bengali little books. Other libraries which possibly house such materials include the Bada Bazaar Library, Kolkata. Chicago has much digitised material too. Their catalogue should be checked to avoid duplication. If the University of Chicago has digitised vernacular tracts already, we should be able to get the material from them, through in a triangular, symbiotic relationship.

The aim should be to cover materials that are not already digitised by these initiatives.

6. Photographs and Maps: Like the newspaper and periodical collections, holdings of photographs and maps are also scattered and in various stages of indexing and digitisation under other initiatives.

CSSSC has a project funded by the Ford Foundation, on the cultural history of Eastern India. The focus is on the non-hegemonic histories of Assam, Tripura, etc. The project which includes funds for internships and Ph.D. fellowships, also includes a grant for digitisation. The CSSSC archive has a significant photographic collection pertaining to Tripura and Manipur, which can be mined.

The **Delhi Archives** has photographs as well, but they are of an inferior quality. The library of **Jamia Milia Islamia, Delhi**, has a collection of photographs taken by Chaturvedi on diasporic Indians.

The **National Library, Kolkata** has photographs and there is an ongoing project that concerns the indexing of photographs.

Likewise, the **BL** has photographs and private collections which can be digitised and reunited with the Indian collections.

Maps are a more difficult category to negotiate with, since the NAI is cagey about giving them out because of their sensitive content, on the question of boundary areas, etc. Maps can be obtained from other repositories like the Delhi Archive. And, of course, the BL.

7. Creating an archive on the making of New Delhi: The BL has a lot of material on town-planning, drainage etc of New Delhi. If this could be followed up to 1947, it would make for a fascinating reconstruction of the archive of the metropolis.

8. Ethnographic archives: These have not been touched by earlier microfilming projects. The works of Herbert Risley, Edgar Thurnston and other ethnographers are

very rich in caste description, folklore etc. Again, this project would have a broad appeal among many constituencies, because the archive would be important not merely for historians, but also for civil society groups and activists. It would constitute a huge archive on the lower castes.

This could tie in with the work of the Social Justice Initiative of the HEC. The initiative is currently headed by Dr. Milind Wakankar, Fellow, CSCS. So far, the initiative has worked with the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies, Pune University, Pune. Pune has much material on the satyashodhak movement, which was an anti-caste movement. Incipient efforts have been made at digitising this archive, with the help of a camera, whose images have then been uploaded to a DVD. The University wishes to put the material up on its website, and is also open to giving up the DVDs.

The Social Justice Initiative is interested in exploring if some of this material can be turned into useful readers which can be interjected back into curricula. Dalit and OBC students come from rich traditions of anti-caste Enlightenment and would benefit from this literature. The challenges lie in identifying what material needs to be digitised, how to make it accessible, which implies issues of both technology and digital literacy of these students.

9. Legal records: There is a huge mass of legal material (law reports, cases) that is truly in a mess in India. These records are difficult to access too, since they are often held by Courts.

10. Records on indentured labour: Digitising all reports on indentured labour in India would have relevance for researchers in the Caribbean and Pacific regions too.

11. Records of the General Committee of Public Interaction (GCPI): The National Library, Kolkata has these records, which are fundamental to the writing of histories that are under-written so far: For instance, the history of education, or of text books, or of publishing and print. Digitising the GCPI records would open up these areas for research.

● **Coming up with research proposals:**

Some recommendations were made to guide the identification of research themes and proposals, as against identifying chunks of material for digitisation.

1. Research / pedagogic interests in Universities: Researching the curricula and research interests of Universities would also provide a map of the thrust areas in historical research / pedagogy. This would enable the identification of potential research projects. The rider was that non-metropolitan Universities (i.e. not only JNU and DU) should be considered for this exercise.

2. Collaboration across research centres: The recommendation was made that research centres in India should identify thematic unities, through internal brainstorming sessions. The scope of projects should be a broader history of empire, India and across the ocean.

3. Curated proposals: One recommendation for identifying research projects that involved digitisation was to put together curated proposals. The pros and cons of such proposals were discussed. Curated proposals could be put together jointly by scholars keeping in view existing digitisation initiatives, research themes, their personal connections and informal networks across institutions. However, this would mean getting people involved around our own individual projects. The BL-HEC project is wider and this focus should not be lost. India and London have to be retained as the nodal points for the project.

4. Call for proposals: It was finally agreed that a call for proposals should be advertised, perhaps in the Economic and Political Weekly (EPW). The call should be wide enough to accommodate local libraries, who have their own idea about what needs to be digitised. It would thereby address those who are familiar with the material that is available in the BL and in India. Thus, the call should have a province level component, so that the net is cast wider and is not restricted to the usual academicians and archivists in DU and JNU. A committee can then decide on the final selection of projects.

● **Getting students on board:**

It was recommended that the initiative should percolate down to students so as to encourage use of digitised material and research. One way to involve younger scholars could be to take their help to discover material in the various repositories in India, which they visit as part of their research. This would be exciting work for students since it is an investigative exercise that feeds into their own research. Students could, for example, track down and make an inventory of the weekly newspapers and journals they consult.

● **Research Fellowships:**

The India strategy proposes that three research fellowships should be made available in a year to early career scholars, to cover the costs of a visit of upto 8 weeks in London. The visiting fellows would spend time in the BL and comb the archive and curate material that would feed into a research project.

It was recommended that a middle level researcher may be better suited to this task than a young researcher. A middle career researcher would be better aware of the material in the BL, rather than find their way through it and discover it newly. This would produce better results given the limited duration of the visit.

The procedure for advertising the research fellowships and selecting eligible researchers would need to be worked out. Fellows who are interested in the research themes may be invited.

● **Criteria for identifying projects: sustainability, social impact:**

The BL delegation identified large thematic areas that had emerged from the consultation: Gender Studies, Colonial Studies, Climate, Hidden Histories, Mapping Social Change, Transmigration and Diasporas, Censorship, India and Empire, Identity and Belief, among others. It was suggested that “Climate Change” as a thematic area was stymied. A broader area could be science and the environment. A comprehensive list of the emerging research areas identified is available on power-point at:

The identification of digitisation projects would be led by research questions. However, the component of feasibility was essential and this would include the following considerations:

1. Use in teaching
2. Comprehensiveness of material
3. Possibility of mass digitisation
4. Scope for scholarly community to work together in a symbiotic way
5. Scope for collaborations across UK and Indian Universities
6. Potential as quick win or long-term
7. Impact on other disciplines
8. Impact on the world outside the academy
9. The expected longevity / life of the digitised material
10. Impact on different kinds of learning, such as distance learning etc
11. Long term sustainability — Funding

Debate on criteria: Funding / Research?

The criteria that the BL delegation suggested were subjected to scrutiny. Were such criteria driven by a funding logistic or by research agendas?

● On the question of use:

The BL delegation suggested that the past experience of digitisation initiatives has been that when projects are driven by research agendas, the material selected becomes limited to a certain line of research. Its use, therefore, becomes limited to the principal investigator and her students, who are engaged in that line of inquiry. The purpose of digitisation, on the other hand, is to make full runs of material available to everyone, to enable different research projects.

However, usage can be generated as other delegates pointed out. Use can be about building curricula around the material digitised etc.

● On the question of impact assessment / consumption:

The current academic situation in India and the UK is one where the social sciences are increasingly being asked to demonstrate their relevance and social usefulness. State funding in the arts and humanities sector is shrinking, and these disciplines are being asked to justify why tax payers' money should be used for liberal higher education.

The impact of the arts and humanities is assessed by parameters such as impact on other disciplines, notably science and technology, impact on other institutions (legal and medical institutions, the army even), impact on civil society, and so on. In the case of the digitisation initiative, all these parameters would count. One visible indicator of impact, or at least consumption, is the number of hits the digitised material gets.

Funding is often driven by these criteria, which means the donors assess the impact of the project in terms of these outcomes.

There was much debate on this. Should the initiative be driven by a funding logistic or a have a research orientation? Funders are more interested in some research areas, say climate change, than others like gender studies, due precisely to the way the knowledge economy operates. Certain fields can demonstrate greater consumption and economic / social impact than others.

Further to this, there are constituencies of tax-payers who are not reflected in the number of hits online material may get. In India, for instance, the state encourages the entry of Dalit and OBC students into higher education through reservations, but does not empower these students to be digitally literate and use e-resources. Or even revise the curricula to incorporate their experience and make it relevant to them. For these reasons, the drive towards impact assessment in research has met with much resistance in India.

It was recommended that the guiding principle should be access and outreach, rather than usage; the aim has to be access to first-time users, who are located in small towns. Free and open access should also be the principle that underlies the various business models that the initiative evolves to host and disseminate the material.

- **On the question of inter-disciplinarity, and impact on other disciplines**

It was recommended that we explore the inter-disciplinary potential of a theme, rather than whether it speaks to experts in other disciplines. There can be more inter-disciplinarity within a discipline, than without. An instance is French historiography.

- **Clarification about whether the projects are about digitisation or research**

A lack of clarity resulted from the seemingly contradictory statements that were made about criteria to identify material for digitisation. Were research themes and curated proposals to guide such selection? Identifying collections to be digitised on the basis of research themes / questions is limiting, for this would limit the selection and use of the material to groups of researchers who are pursuing a certain line of inquiry. At the preliminary level, digitisation should have a broader purpose--to archive, complete and make available full runs of material online to enable their use by a wide community of researchers.

Research projects can follow later: This aspect relates to the use of the digitised material, for new and innovative research, for research collaborations across UK and Indian institutes, for curriculum-building. Sustainability of the project would follow from this.

VI. COLLECTIONS IDENTIFIED FOR DIGITISATION: VERNACULAR TRACTS, ETHNOGRAPHIES, VISUAL SOURCES, PUBLIC AND JUDICIAL RECORDS

Four broad masses of material were identified by the consultants at the workshop, for digitisation:

1. **Vernacular Tracts:** Vernacular tracts and newspapers cover many of the research themes that were identified during the consultation. There is a great readership for these tracts, even outside the academy.

2. **Ethnographic Material:** Late 19th century ethnographies reveal how people were writing about themselves. This project could also feed into others, such as the HEC's Social Justice project on the *satyashodhak* movement, or even the early Bengali books. Together they would make a unified project.

3. **Visual Sources:** This would be of use to the emerging areas of visual and spatial histories. Photographs, images, paintings, drawings, advertisements are all part of historians' repertoire, and have become important as a source, as opposed to text-based histories. Likewise, maps and cartography are a source for the telling of spatial histories and writing a critical geography: histories of hills, islands, urban spaces.

The existing projects can be pilot projects, e.g. the Mewar Ramayana and the proposed digitisation of company paintings, which is covered under the MoU with the Ministry of Culture. The IGNCA may be interested in supporting such a project.

4. **Judicial and Public Records:** These records have to do with anything that is thought to be political and have had the widest use so far.

VII: TECHNOLOGICAL STANDARDS OF DISSEMINATION AND HOSTING

Yatrik Patel from INFLIBNET made a presentation about the technological issues involved. The presentation and his recommendations are attached with this report. Also attached is a note written by Aly Conteh of the BL.

VIII: SUMMARY

1. The digitisation of material should not be guided by research projects and curated proposals, because this would limit the selection and use of the material to groups of researchers who are pursuing a certain line of inquiry. At the preliminary level, digitisation should have a broader purpose--to archive, complete and make available full runs of material online to enable their use by a wide audience of researchers.

2. Research projects follow upon digitisation of collections. They relate to the use of the digitised material — for new and innovative research, for research collaborations across UK and Indian institutes, for curriculum-building.

3. Collections identified by the consultants as priorities for digitisation: Vernacular tracts, Ethnographic material, Visual sources, Public and Judicial Records.

4. Subsequent workshops (one in December and one in March) aim to scope out institutional collaborations, research projects, technological support and funding options for two pilot projects: The digitisation of early Bengali books and the

project on climate change. The Mewar Ramayana project is the only one that has funds for digitisation as of now.

5. This is the mandate for the workshops, since the SRTT grant for this year is not meant to support actual digitisation itself, but to show the potential and possibilities of the BL-HEC initiative over the long term: i.e. to identify projects, map other sources of funding, collaborations across Indian and UK institutes, and innovative research themes. These are the outcomes the workshops should aim at, in order to show results during the pilot year. The pilot projects should thus show the potential for the succeeding years. For instance, the workshop on early Bengali books should think about how such material would impact research questions, or how digitising these books would help our understanding of early Bengali society.

7. Similar scoping for the other collections that the consultants identified (vernacular tracts, etc) needs to be worked out, for future initiatives and the long-term India Strategy.

8. The HEC would provide the administrative support and handle governance in India for the initiative.