

The Malaysiana Conference Collection of the University of Malaya Library: The First Phase

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Abstract: *The first phase in the establishment of the Malaysiana Conference Collection began in 1984 and involved locating and collating all proceedings of conferences held locally and papers concerning Malaysia for those held abroad which were already available within the Main Library and bringing them into a special 'Conference Collection' kept within the National Collection Division (NCD) for reference purposes. Simultaneously, form letters were also sent out to request for proceedings of conferences currently held within the country. All papers of these conferences are indexed according to their subject matter and the subject cards filed in the 'Conference Index Card Catalogue' kept outside the NCD. Figures based on statistics compiled in December 1987 showed that there were 2076 titles of conferences in the Collection which contained about 20,000 papers. Figures also showed that borrowing from this Collection has steadily increased since July 1984, which clearly indicated the usefulness of this collection as a source of reference for undergraduates and researchers alike.*

Abstrak: *Pada peringkat pertama penubuhan Koleksi Persidangan Malaysiana yang bermula pada tahun 1984, satu usaha untuk mengumpulkan kertas-kertas persidangan tempatan serta yang meliputi Malaysia tetapi dibentang di luar negeri telah dijalankan. Di dalam usaha tersebut kertas-kertas persidangan yang sedia ada dalam sistem Perpustakaan Utama Universiti Malaya telah dikesan. Dengan ini wujudlah satu 'Koleksi Persidangan' untuk rujukan para pengguna yang diuruskan oleh Bahagian Koleksi Kebangsaan (BKK). Di samping usaha pengumpulan cara tersebut di atas, surat-surat resmi telah juga dihantar kepada penganjur-penganjur persidangan tempatan yang sedang dijalankan. Setiap kertas kerja diindeks mengikut bidang yang diliputi dan kad-kad mengikut bidang ini diatur ke dalam satu 'Katalog Indeks Persidangan' yang diletakkan di luar BKK. Berdasarkan statistik pada bulan Disember 1987, 2076 judul persidangan telah dapat dikumpulkan. Koleksi persidangan ini mengandungi lebih kurang 20,000 kertas kerja-kertas kerja. Perangkaan juga menunjukkan bahawa pinjaman dari koleksi ini kian meningkat sejak bulan Julai 1984. Ini membayangkan betapa bergunanya koleksi ini sebagai bahan rujukan pada para graduan dan penyelidik.*

Conference proceedings have become an increasingly important source of information for those who need to know the state-of-art of the various branches of knowledge. This is especially true of the Malaysiana Conference Proceedings Collection kept in the National Collection Division (NCD), University of Malaya Library, where there has been an increase in the number of borrowings and requests from the collection since a systematic effort was made of acquiring, processing and indexing the locally held conference papers.

It was to accommodate the need of the undergraduates and researchers who consistently faced problems when searching for materials on various topics with a Malaysian orientation, that the NCD decided to gear its efforts towards a more systematic acquisition of papers presented at conferences held in Malaysia and those pertaining to Malaysia presented outside the country. This decision was made sometime in January 1984.

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Acquisition

The very first step taken was to locate all conference proceedings held locally, whether published or unpublished, that could be obtained readily within the Main Library system. Some were found to be located with the NCD itself. This was especially true of conferences in Malay language. A substantial number were sent to the open shelves before the 1980's when the NCD initially concentrated on acquiring materials on the language, literature and culture of the Malay world written in the Malay/Indonesian language. With the help of available clerical staff in the Division, the shelf list catalogue was searched during the University's long vacation in 1984. It was then estimated that about 1,000 titles of locally held conferences were already available within the Main Library. As usual problems were encountered during the search. This was especially so in the case of conference proceedings which had been catalogued under editors. Items which were vague were individually checked by the professional staff of the Division to ascertain whether these collected works were actually collections of papers presented at conferences. Another problem was items which were identified but which could not be located. They were neither found on the open shelves nor were borrowed out.

Simultaneous to the effort of examining the shelf list catalogue, a standard letter was also drafted to request for papers from conferences held currently. Four daily newspapers which were indexed for the newspaper cuttings collection by the Division formed the chief source of information for news on conferences held currently or forthcoming. Name of organizers were usually mentioned in these reports. Directories of professional bodies and telephone directories were searched for addresses of these organizers. Besides information from newspapers, the Library also received pamphlets bearing news of forthcoming conferences or was officially invited to attend some of these conferences. Representatives of the Library who attended these conferences also became important donors to the collection.

Table 1 indicates the total number of conference titles received upon request from January 1984 to December 1987. As expected, figures for each year show that about slightly more than half (56–64%) of organizers were willing to send to the Library copies of collected papers of conferences they organized. Some imposed charges ranging from M\$20–\$200, for which the library was obliged to pay despite tight financial constraints. About 1–3% were kind enough to reply or telephone to inform us that no papers were presented. From January 1984 to December 1987 a total of 656 titles were received upon request.

Accountability for these requests was made possible as details regarding them were maintained since 1984. An addition of 1420 titles were brought into the collection from various other sources such as the open shelves, the NCD collection itself, through exchange programmes with other institutions, gifts from institutions and individuals as well as from representatives of the library who attended conferences. Therefore up to December 1987, the total number of conference titles processed, catalogued and indexed was 2076. Based on this number, it is expected that the collection will grow by about 200 titles each year in the future.

Table 1
Total Number of Malaysia Conference Titles
Received Upon Request from January 1984 to
December 1987

Conference Titles	1984	1985	1986	1987
No. Received	134 (60%)	144 (64.3%)	183 (56%)	195 (59%)
No. Not Received	81 (37%)	77 (34.3%)	138 (42%)	132 (40%)
No papers presented	6 (3%)	3 (1.4%)	6 (2%)	3 (1%)
Total	221 (100%)	224 (100%)	327 (100%)	330 (100%)

1. Total Number of Titles Received by the above method from 1984–1987 656 titles
2. Total Number of Titles taken from:
 - a) The open shelves
 - b) Existing NCD collection
 - c) Exchanges, gifts, bought, etc. 1420 titles
 Total 2076 titles

Table 2 shows the type of titles received based on broad disciplines determined by the Library of Congress Classification scheme. This can easily be identified by the class numbers given to the processed titles. The figures show that out of 2076 titles in the collection 1758 titles (85%) are titles in the discipline of the Social Sciences and Humanities, the bulk of which are in the field of Economics and Sociology numbering 966. It shall be shown later that this trend in acquisition is in harmony with the need of users of this collection since borrowings tend to orientate towards titles from the Humanities and especially the Social Sciences.

Future policy considerations regarding the Malaysia Conference Collection located in the Main Library may also need to take into account this

Table 2
Types of Malaysiana Conference Titles that are in the
Conference Collection up to Dec 1987

Subject Areas based on the Library of Congress Subject Headings	Total Number of Titles from Jan 1984 – Dec 1987	
A – C (Generalia, Philosophy & Religion)	128	6%
D – E (History)	124	6%
G – H (Geography, Anthropology and Social Sciences)	966	47%
J – K (Political Science & Law)	56	3%
L – N (Education, Music & Fine Arts)	236	11%
P (Languages and Literature)	167	8%
Q – T (Science, Medicine, Agriculture & Technology)	318	15%
U – Z (Armed Forces, Bibliographies & Library Science)	81	4%
Total No. of Titles	2076	100%

trend. The likely question then will be whether this collection should in reality focus its attention in terms of the acquisition, processing and indexing of titles mainly on the above mentioned disciplines so as to achieve a more efficient and productive bibliographic control of these types of material.

Indexing

All titles brought into the Malaysiana Conference Collection were checked to determine whether recataloguing needed to be done. This was to ensure that no future changes in class numbers would occur, as this would complicate searching for such items after they have been indexed. Recataloguing was especially needed since the Library had strictly adopted the Anglo American Cataloguing Rules revised edition (AACR II) from 1980 onwards. Also numerous changes in the Library of Congress Classification scheme especially in the Social Sciences necessitated recataloguing of older titles in order to achieve uniformity with the newly acquired ones. These recatalogued items were entered into the Library's Malmarc database. All titles when processed were labelled 'Koleksi Persidangan' (Conference Collection) and placed on a separate shelving sequence close to the borrowing counter in the NCD. This was to ascertain that every title could be easily retrieved to meet users' needs.

As mentioned earlier, there were about 2076 titles in the collection up to December 1987. Each title contained an average of 10 papers. It was estimated that about 20,000 papers were available for reference from the 2076 titles. Each paper of the conferences

was indexed using the Library of Congress Subject Headings (9th edition) as a guide. However in some cases, terms which were more popularly used in this country were preferred for easy reference. Specific Malay cultural terms were used such as 'silat' instead of 'martial arts' and 'Pondok (Islamic religious education)' instead of 'Islamic religious education'.

For each paper indexed, details such as the name of the presenter, title of the paper, title of the conference in which the paper was presented and class number of the conference title were typed on 7.5 x 12.5 cm catalogue cards. The cards for each paper presented at various conferences were then arranged in an alphabetical sequence according to subject. Each paper may be given a maximum of three subject headings. This decision was made so as not to bulk the subject card catalogue index unnecessarily. Therefore, the Malaysiana Conference Index Card catalogue is at present in 2 main sequences, namely titles of conferences held in the collection arranged alphabetically and a subject sequence for all papers presented. This card catalogue has been placed outside the Division for users' reference from June 1984.

Due to the heavy workload involved in typing multiple cards and filing them in the subject sequence, the Division decided to obtain assistance through the Vote F (Research vote) Scheme, which is available to university personnel undertaking any kind of research. This Vote was obtained in July 1985 with an allocated sum of M\$3,056.00. This allocation was used to hire the services of 2 temporary typists from July 1985 to July 1986 to help with the typing and filing of cards.

Analysis of Borrowing

It is indeed satisfying to observe that once a service is provided, it is in actual fact used. This was true of the Malaysiana Conference Collection. Proper monitoring of borrowings from the National Collection Division had shown that borrowings from the Conference Collection had increased from year to year since June 1984. Each borrower was required to fill in a form which showed details about the type of item borrowed (i.e., whether it was a conference paper, thesis, journal or reprint article) and which discipline the item belonged to (shown by the class number).

Table 3 shows total borrowings from the Division by type of materials from July 1984 to December

1987. The statistics clearly indicate an increase from 2,489 in 1984 to 10,227 in 1987. The most heavily borrowed items are theses and conference papers. From 1986 to 1987 however, borrowings from the Conference Collection (42%–46%) surpass that of the theses (38%) and this trend is expected to continue. This indicates that as more and more papers are indexed, more usage of the collection can be anticipated.

Table 4 shows details of borrowing trends from the Malaysiana Conference Collection. As indicated earlier, borrowings from the Malaysiana Conference Collection increased steadily from 1984 to 1987. Monthly borrowings of the collection each year,

Table 3
Total Borrowings from the National Collection Division
by Type of Materials From July 1984 – Dec 1987

Type of Materials	From July		1985	%	1986	%	1987	%
	1984	%						
Malay Collection	381	15%	845	17%	816	11%	1078	10%
Conference Proceeding Collection	473	19%	1344	28%	3004	42%	4669	46%
Periodicals	278	11%	419	9%	528	8%	516	5%
Reprint Collection	Not available		54	1%	66	1%	56	1%
Theses	1357	55%	2179	45%	2076	38%	3908	38%
Total Borrowings by Year	2489	100%	4841	100%	7210	100%	10,227	100%

Table 4
Monthly Breakdown of Borrowings from the
Conference Proceedings Collection from July 1984 to 1987

Month	From Jul 1984	1985	1986	1987
Jan		138	111	523
Feb		28	77	259
Mar		15	100	65
Apr		23	75	52
May		15	45	35
Jun		21	28	32
Jul	18	36	114	150
Aug	59	148	309	548
Sept	40	151	497	861
Oct	75	307	855	787
Nov	167	270	310	531
Dec	114	192	483	826
Total Borrowings by Year	473	1344	3004	4669

clearly show a distinctive trend of heavier borrowings during the semester months and a decline during vacations.

Table 5 shows the pattern of borrowings in various disciplines based on statistics collected in 1986 and 1987. As mentioned earlier, borrowings in the

Humanities and Social Sciences surpass that of Science and Technology. The most heavily borrowed items are those in the field of Economics and Social Sciences followed closely by titles in Education and History. This trend of borrowings complements active acquisition in these same fields.

Table 5
Borrowings from the Conference Collection
According to Broad Subject Areas in 1986-1987

Subject Areas based on the Library of Congress Subject Headings	1986	1987
A - C (Generalia, Philosophy & Religion)	239 (8%)	508 (10.8%)
D (History)	416 (13.8%)	604 (13%)
G - H (Geography, Anthropology & Social Sciences)	1175 (39%)	1742 (37%)
J (Political Science)	56 (2%)	116 (3%)
L - N (Education, Music & Fine Arts)	717 (24%)	972 (21%)
P (Languages and Literature)	217 (7%)	441 (9%)
Q - T (Science, Medicine, Agriculture & Technology)	175 (6%)	277 (6%)
Z (Bibliographies and Library Science)	9 (0.2%)	9 (0.2%)
Total Borrowings	3004 (100%)	4669 (100%)

Conclusion

The present card catalogue of the Malaysiana Conference Collection has its limitations, even though it seems to be very popular with users. First, it does not cater for the author/paper presenter approach. It is therefore impossible at present to find out how many papers have been written by a particular person. The decision for excluding the author sequence was made so as not to bulk up the card catalogue unnecessarily.

Moreover there are plans to enter the current Malaysiana Conference Index data into the computer whereby the various desired approaches for searching can be used. Secondly, because of space constraints, the number of subject headings has to be kept to a minimum and this curtails detailed analysis of a multi-

disciplinary paper. It is hoped that eventually when all data is entered into the computer no such constraints will be faced.

Thirdly, no item from this collection is allowed to be borrowed out of the library since the library usually receives only one copy from the organizers who are kind enough to comply with our requests. The collection is therefore available purely for reference within the premises.

In spite of all the drawbacks mentioned above it is very encouraging to observe that these have not hampered the use of conference papers. This is especially indicated by the increase in the borrowings from this collection from 473 in 1984 to 4669 in 1987 and this trend is expected to grow in the future.