

REORGANIZATION OF THE COLLÈGE DE FRANCE LIBRARIES



On 26th June 2005 the Assembly of the Professors of the Collège de France adopted proposals for reorganizing the libraries, both general and specialist, of the Collège de France and the Instituts d'Orient (Oriental Institutes). These changes have come into effect from 1st January 2006. The aim was to reaffirm the uniqueness of the services provided by the Collège de France's libraries. They are open to the outside, integrated into the network of university and research libraries, and a partner of the BULAC (University Library of Languages and Civilizations).

Building up a priceless patrimony

To understand the impact of this reorganization, it is necessary to recall how, over time, this exceptional documentary patrimony was built up. By its nature and through its missions, the Collège de France has occupied, since 1530, an original position in the fields of teaching and research. It was here that, in France, Greek, Arabic, Sanskrit, Chinese, Assyrian and of course, with Champollion, ancient Egyptian were first officially taught. The professors who taught these subjects were often among the best in the world in their subjects. The documents they used were for a long time their own personal property, the fruit of acquisitions, exchanges or of tributes from French and foreign colleagues. Many were bequeathed to the Collège de France. Thus a very rich collection was built up, but it was split up among the different chairs, and sometimes kept in specialized institutes.

In 1936, these collections were organized for the first time into a general library. From the end of the 1970s, the number of acquisitions made by the Collège de France has increased considerably, making some of its specialized collections equal to anything found in the best libraries in the world. At the same time, we started

to computerize the catalogues, which did present some difficulty given the specificity of the collections. It is a highly complex task to catalogue books written in Chinese, Indian, Tibetan, Arabic, etc. both in their original language and in Latin transcription with all the cross-referencing and indexing that this entails.

A few examples



The library of the Egyptology Institute is probably the best in the world; given the fact that Egyptology has been, since its beginnings, a major discipline of the Collège de France.



The library of the Institute of the Chinese Superior Studies hosts a unique collection of local monographs.



The library of the Institute of Indian Studies has a complete cartographic coverage of the Indian sub-continent as well as a computerised photographic library of 20 000 slides.



The library of the Institute of Byzantine Studies, in the process of reorganisation, is already the best in Europe in its field.



An agreement is currently in the process of negotiation with the Asian Society to improve the availability of its library's extremely rich resources to researchers.



The library of the laboratory of social Anthropology, created since its introduction to the Collège de France by Claude Levi-Strauss, is one of the most important libraries of general anthropology in France. Its originality is to work in close association with the CNRS (national centre for scientific research), where it hosts a very important research team, and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales. It thus benefits from the scientific contribution and the talents of many highly ranked researchers.

The reorganization project

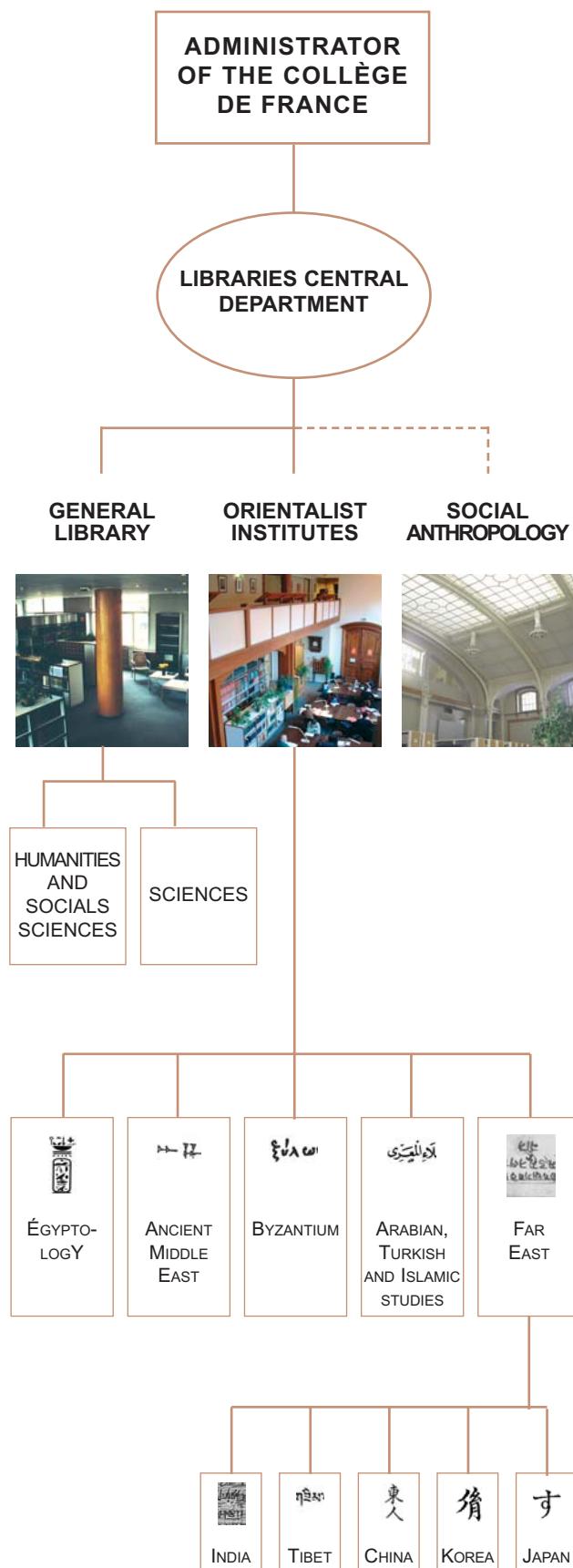
Today the reorganization of the libraries has become a necessity.

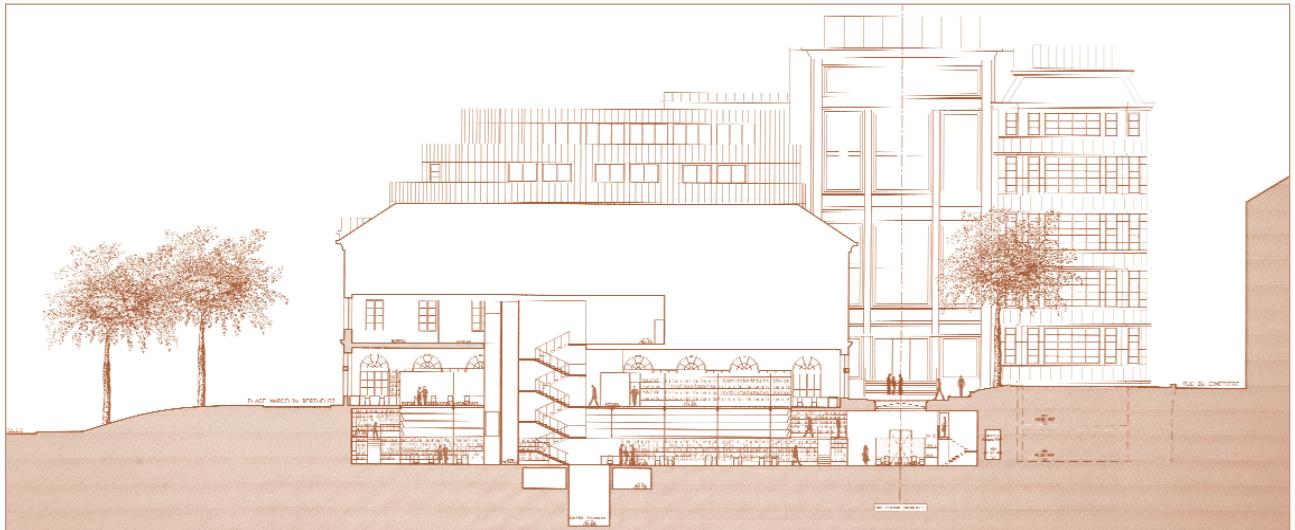
- The lack of space is a chronic problem for libraries. The reinstallation of the general library in premises that have been entirely renovated, but which do not have the capacity to hold the 120,000 volumes in the collection, means that the library's missions must be redefined now, so that we can separate those works that need to be present in our main building at Place Marcelin Berthelot from those that can be kept elsewhere.
- In a general context of a shortage of funds and library staff – and of increased competition between the institutions concerned –, it has become essential to highlight the specificity and usefulness of the Collège de France's collections, and to make them more visible. The lack of staff limits the number of readers the libraries can accept: these libraries will therefore be reserved for researchers – which complies with the Collège de France's vocation. It also limits the opening hours, which will have to be adjusted in accordance with the availability of staff.

The reorganization project will enable us to create one single archive for printed, sound and photographic collections that represent a large share of France's and the world's intellectual memory. Certain tasks will be centralized, particularly those concerning the management of staff and the libraries' technical operations: cataloguing, interconnecting computerized catalogues, coordinating acquisitions, the storage of large instruments, bringing together and putting in a safe place old publications of great bibliophilic and patrimonial value, etc. The aim is to rationalize and modernize the Collège de France's library system.



Organization chart





Cross section of the future library

Reorganized and modernized spaces

The general library will soon be installed in premises that are being built anew in the East wing of the Chalgrin building, Place Marcelin Berthelot (Paris). As for the premises in Cardinal Lemoine Street, which house the specialized libraries, they will be redesigned. The structure will be changed to reinforce these libraries' vocation to provide excellence.

The photographic and sound documents as well as the films need special precautions and computerized inventories. The Collège de France library system has been rethought to ensure its development, to make the libraries more accessible to researchers while preserving their patrimonial value and respecting the constraints imposed by conservation requirements.

A rationalized organization

The reforms approved by the Assembly of the Professors will see the implementation of the following principles:

- All of the Collège de France's documentary collections will be held in one single department.

This will consist of:

1. A general library, which will be located in the new premises under construction at Place Marcelin Berthelot. It is not intended to be exhaustive, except with regard to the history of the Collège de France and its Professors. Some specialized collections will be kept nearer the laboratories.

2. Two specialized libraries: the Oriental libraries and the library of the Laboratory of Social Anthropology, which are located at Cardinal Lemoine Street. Some of them contain

exceptional collections that complement those of the BULAC, and will remain reference libraries on a national and European scale. Partnerships with the CNRS (French national research centre) and the BULAC have been signed.

These three elements are from now on regarded as a single body with its own unique budget; it is managed by the head librarian of the Collège de France, assisted by a deputy and a scientific council.

- This department is now part of the French network of university and research libraries. It is open to all the staff of the Collège de France as well as to researchers outside the Collège de France, and particularly those institutions that have signed agreements with the Collège.
- General policy directions concerning documentary materials will be decided by the Assembly of the Professors represented by its Administrator, who presides over the libraries' Scientific Council. This council, now set up, is open to representatives of other institutions, viz. the head of the sub-department of libraries and documentation at the Ministry of Research, a representative of the director general of the CNRS, the director of the BULAC, etc.

A prime place on a French and European scale

This reorganization now enables us to affirm the unity of the system; promote collaboration with other Parisian and foreign libraries; allow many researchers outside the Collège de France access to scientific documentation that their research depends on and retain, for certain collections, original management procedures that have proved their worth.

The General Library's mission is to provide its users, irrespective of their discipline, with services that allow

them to find the works and periodicals they need; to advise them how to use these resources, particularly digitized resources available on CD-Rom or on the Internet; to assemble a collection of books and periodicals. Its task is also to bring together and keep all written materials relating to the history of the Collège de France and its Professors.

Some of its collections are of exceptional importance (history of Spain and of Latin America, Caucasian languages etc). The Oriental Institutes, located in Cardinal Lemoine Street, house under one management specialized libraries that, in their fields, are the best in France and often in Europe. This structure by Institutes is historical: the core of these libraries is made up of the former libraries of different chairs. The new organization guarantees the continued existence of libraries that might have been threatened by a vacancy in a chair in the scientific field concerned. The permanent participation of researchers not belonging to the Collège de France in the management of these libraries is a guarantee of continuity. It is also a guarantee of adaptability: indeed, researchers are best placed to manage the acquisitions policy and to spot useful new titles.

These libraries are visited by many foreign researchers. Even if donations and bequests of works are numerous, maintaining these collections at the highest level will require more and more money and space: the production of books in China, Japan and India is increasing exponentially, as is the scientific output concerning these countries.

The group of Institutes located in Cardinal Lemoine Street forms a place of intense, interdisciplinary and very free intellectual life.

In its desire to enhance the status of this exceptional patrimony and to make it available to the scientific community, the Collège de France has undertaken a wide-ranging reform, with the assistance of institutions devoted to safeguarding and exploiting cultural riches, to the transmission of knowledge and the evolution of the sciences. ■

M.K.

adapted from documents presented by Professor Gérard Fussman to the Assembly of the Professors of the Collège de France

The Collège de France Library or should we say libraries?



Our libraries have always been carefully looked after by successive administrators and the professors in charge of the scientific side of their activity. During the last ten years, they have undergone a delicate transformation supervised by the administrator, Jacques Glowinski. Work is well under way on the future General Library and reinstallation will soon take place. The current team is at the moment planning the return of collections that have been stored temporarily at Fleury-Mérogis. New arrangements, outlined in the present issue of the Letter, will also be in place when the library reopens.

It would not be fair to think that the General Library and its staff have been leading an easy life during this period of apparent latency. Since 1997, the collections (around 120,000 works) have been moved around a great deal from illustrious surroundings to places that are less commendable, between the erudite rue des Écoles, the

bare plains of the Val de Marne, the hospitable basements at Chatenay-Malabry, the orchards of Meudon, the pipe dreams of Nogent to finally end up at Fleury-Mérogis. However, there is now light at the end of the tunnel after all these long tribulations...

During this time, the staff have been involved in a race against time and have planted the first seeds of their future strategy for providing services so that everything will be in place when the library reopens: they have drawn up the outlines of a charter, redefined the nature of documentation, "weeded out" obsolete or unsuitable collections and produced a plan for developing electronic documentary sources.

The reduction of space and means has had a negative effect on subscriptions and acquisitions. On the other hand, as we were unable to use our own collections, inter-library lending and the sourcing of documents from distant places have grown considerably.

To ensure bibliographical coordination between the Collège's different specialist libraries, the first step was to create a catalogue. This catalogue was first created in the specialist libraries, starting with the IEOs (Institutes of the Far East) and the library of Arabic and Islamic Studies (with texts using non-Latin characters included), then in the General Library. It is at present a central element of our policy of cooperation with the libraries department, which supervises or coordinates the cataloguing of

acquisitions made by the libraries of Assyriology and History of Eastern Christianities. Today, at this address <http://quinet.college-de-france.fr>, six of the Collège de France's bibliographical databases can be consulted on the Internet. Apart from the General Library and the Library of Egyptology, which were the first ones, it is possible to consult simultaneously or selectively in one single search the databases of the Byzantine Library, the Library of Semitic Studies, the Library of Assyriology and the Library of the History of Eastern Christianities. Catalogues in non-Latin characters, in view of their distinctive feature, will be included subsequently. The IEOs can access them at the following address <http://quinet.college-de-france.fr:81>.

For 2 years now, we have been part of the system of higher education documentation - the SUDOC (Système universitaire de documentation de l'enseignement supérieur), which has a register of several million references. For a long time, it has enabled our own teachers and researchers to find references and source from outside our institution the documents they need. It also enables us to show outside researchers how extensive our specific, and in some cases unique, collections of works are. The General Library uses the SUDOC as a tool in its retrospective cataloguing, profiting from the work done by other research libraries that possess the same works. In the not too distant future we hope that the specialist collections of the libraries of the Instituts d'Orient (Eastern Institutes) will also be included in this immense national catalogue, and we will thus be able to see the complementary nature of the collections belonging to the Collège de France and to its partners, the Bibliothèque Universitaire des Langues et Civilisations (University Library for Languages and Civilisations) and the École Normale Supérieure.



At the same time, following the initiative of the library of the Institut de Biologie (Institute of Biology), the libraries of the Collège de France have joined together to present on one site the online reviews to which they have taken out subscriptions. It is possible, from any workstation connected to the Collège de France network, to access the unabridged version of around one hundred reviews (exact sciences and human sciences) by logging on to the site <http://doc-ib.college-de-france.fr/ejournalsCdF/>. In addition, certain laboratories have access to bibliographical or textual databases that are subject to subscriptions like JSTOR (Journal Storage), and which contain the archives of digital publications.

The installation of the General Library in its new premises will bring it back to the heart of the Collège de France, and will ensure better coordination with the Scientific Council. This will also be accompanied by the implementation of new services using the facilities offered by the IT networks: discussions about acquisitions, creation of bibliographies, training in how to search databases, the sourcing of documents from distant places, the monitoring of new developments in documentation. ■

Marie-Renée Cazabon

The Asiatic Society and the Collège de France*



The Asiatic Society's first meeting was held on 1st April 1822, a French manifestation of European countries' fascination with Orientalism at the beginning of the

19th century. The Collège de France had indeed just created in 1814 the Chairs of Chinese and Sanskrit. The Royal Asiatic Society was established in London in 1824, the Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft and the American Oriental Society in 1842.

The first president of the Society was quite naturally Sylvestre de Sacy (1758-1838), professor of Persian at the Collège, and its honorary president was the Duke of Orléans who, when he became King Louis-Philippe, still continued his patronage of the Society. There were then 37 foreign associate members and 111 subscribers, with famous names like Chateaubriand among them by 1823. Its regulations then were more or less similar to today's. The Society acquired personal civil status by royal edict on 15th April 1829, which entitled it to receive donations and bequests. Its statutes were revised by decree on 16th June 1910.



In its early years the Council included several members of the government: the Duke of Richelieu, minister of Foreign Affairs, then president of the Council; the Marquis of Clermont-Tonnerre, Navy, then War minister, etc. The other members of the Council were Orientalists only by profession, but they were very famous (Rémusat, Chézy, Champollion the younger, etc.).

The society was very open: its main centre of interest was initially intended to be literature and history, but it soon came to include knowledge of the geography, economies and contemporary politics of the countries of the Orient in its fields of study. Aristocrats took an interest in it, mainly those who had come back from abroad and who had experience of countries other than France (the Duke of Richelieu had commanded Russian troops against the Turks). It also aroused the interest of intellectuals who were curious about a world that had been hidden up to then and where discoveries revealed unsuspected connections with the West. These common roots came to light as a result of different events: the Egyptian expedition (the letter to M. Dacier dates from 1822), the discovery by Bopp in 1816 of the common parentage of languages known as "Indo-European", which he noted in his book entitled "On the Conjugation System of Sanskrit in comparison with that of Greek, Latin, Persian and Germanic", or the publication of "Chinese Grammar" by A. Rémusat (1822).

The departure of a lot of society people in 1830 meant that the Asiatic Society no longer hesitated between being a "literary salon" or an "institution of learning". From that moment, it brought together those who were to make 19th-century Orientalism famous in its many forms, most of whom were Collège de France professors: A. Rémusat and S. Julien (China), E. Burnouf (Persia and India), J.F. Champollion and G. Maspéro (Egypt), J. Oppert (cuneiforms, which he

was an expert at deciphering), E. Renan (Bible); from more modern times were S. Lévy, P. Pelliot, P. Demiéville, L. Renou, J. Filliozat, É. Benveniste, A. Caquot.

The Society publishes a journal called the "Journal asiatique" (JA) and, up to now, 292 issues have appeared. It publishes the minutes of meetings, but, more importantly, scientific articles or reviews of works relating to Orientalism. It also has a library of 100,000 printed works in every field of Orientalism, mostly comprising bequests from the scientific libraries of its members: E. Chavannes, P. Demiéville (China), E. Sézart (India), J. Bacot (Tibet) J. Filliozat (Indian medicine); it is current practice for its members to donate their works.

Among the library's many treasures are engravings, the archives of the Kingdom of Campa and different types of manuscripts written in the various Asian languages (parchments, Asian papers, palm leaves). Finally, it possesses the scientific archives of several scholars, like the collection of glass photographic plates from A. Fouquer's missions to Afghanistan.

19th century Orientalism has to be seen as part of the continual growth in the number of fields of study. Today, the growing number of documents available and the difficulty in exploiting them often make it impossible for experts to access fields related to their own speciality. Creating a forum in which experts can come together is a necessity and the Society has retained its original function as a link and a coordinator. The length of time it has been in existence is proof of the interest it has aroused; its fellow organizations around the world, older in the Orient, younger in the West, have built up a network that has enabled Western research to study the many civilizations and cultures that are exterior to it, but which are often the source of many of its questions and the responses to them. ■

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* This presentation of mine has drawn its inspiration from a memorandum containing a wealth of information on the Asiatic Society written by Pierre-Sylvain Filliozat, member of the Institute, son of Jean Filliozat who was a professor at the Collège de France from 1952 to 1978, and serving vice-president of the Asiatic Society. The illustrations in this article come from works in the Asiatic Society's library.