



Nation Building
through
Information
Sharing

Afghanistan Centre at Kabul University





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.

In 2005, Ashraf Ghani (current President of Afghanistan), 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>).



photo: Reza Hussaini

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 100,000 items. ACKU's collection—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 Centre 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; Hence, ACKU aims to contribute to on-going state building processes by providing access to knowledge.

ACKU is focused on four main thematic areas:

- Expanding and Preserving the ACKU Collections (Library)
- ACKU's Box Library Extension (ABLE)
- Research
- Communications and Outreach

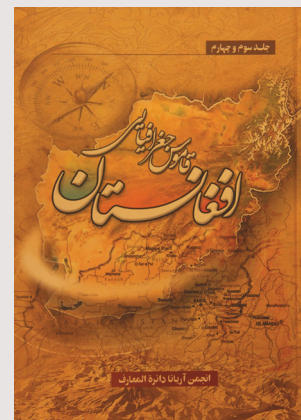
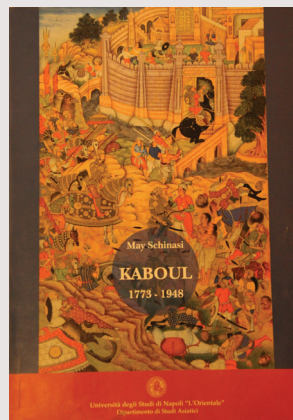
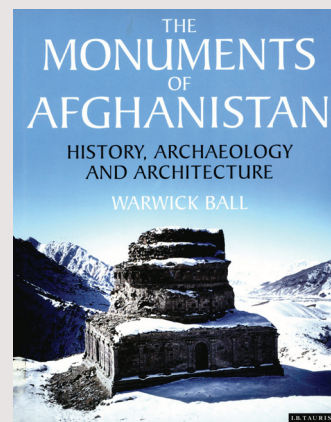
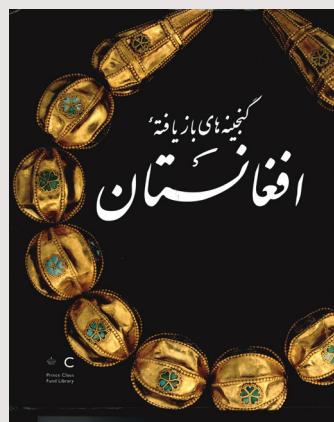
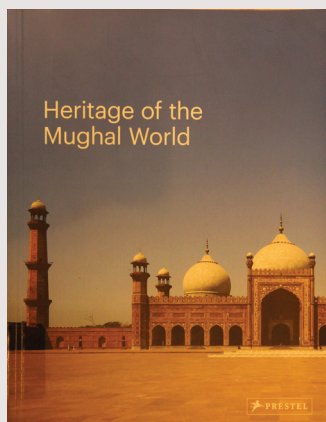
LIBRARY

Acquisitions and Cataloguing

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.

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 Rules2 (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 (<http://catalog.acku.edu.af/>) or as part of the ACKU KOHA database in the Reading Room.

ACKU plans to catalogue more than 12,000 titles comprising monographs and serials, PDF documents downloaded from internet.



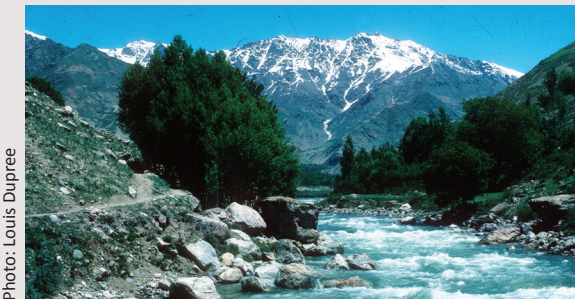
LIBRARY

Photo Archive

The ACKU Photo Archives are organized in galleries with texts for each image (<http://ackuimages.photoshelter.com>). They are fully searchable and are intended for use as a research tool to strengthen a deeper appreciation of Afghanistan's people and their rich cultural history. Cataloging began in 2015, so this is a work in progress and will be for some time. There are currently four photo collections: 1) the Khalilullah Enayat Seraj Collection of antique photographs

from 1880 to 1929; 2) the Louis Dupree Collection from 1950 up to 1995 covering numerous journeys around the country, archaeological sites, trips with the mujahideen during the jihad, and visits to refugee camps in Afghanistan; 3) Dr. William Barton Collection, a Public Health consultant studying sanitation systems in Kabul in 1965; 4) the Jean Willacy Collection of life in Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan over a period of twenty years beginning in 1979.

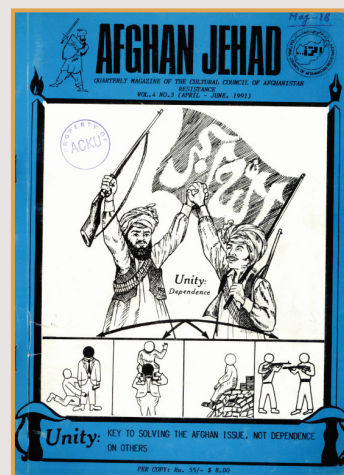
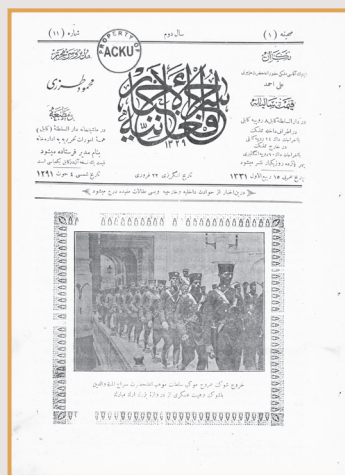
HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE PHOTO ARCHIVE



Currently over 1,478,506 pages are scanned, while 41,539 PDFs books, serials, newspapers, etc. are accessible at ACKU's digital website (<http://digital.acku.edu.af/>), which is jointly maintained with the University of Arizona. ACKU plans to digitize a total number of 600,000 pages of its collection accessible

via internet in the period of 2016-2019. In partnership with Afghanistan's Ministry of Higher Education, ACKU will share its collections by launching ACKU stations with universities in Herat, Kandahar, Mazar and Nangrahar, through which ACKU will have support students to access the online collection.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE DIGITIZED COLLECTION



LIBRARY

Reading Room

ACKU's Reading Room accommodates Afghan students with its current 20 computer stations connected to ACKU's KOHA database (<http://acku.edu.af>), with the search capacity in three languages (Dari, Pashto, and English). Monthly 3,500 students are registered users of the ACKU's reading room and 5500 users use ACKU online database (koha and D-space database, <http://www.afghandata.org>).



Photo: Joel van Houdt



Photo: Joel van Houdt

LIBRARY Archives

ACKU holds the region's most extensive collection of primary resources on Afghanistan. Highlights from the archives include:

- 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)
 - 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
- A photo collection of over four thousand prints and slides featuring Afghanistan from the nineteenth century through to the present
 - More than 10,000 photos from Louise Dupree collection. The collection includes landscapes in all provinces, Kabul over the years, archaeological sites, pre-historic tools, the works of outstanding Afghan artists, folk art, objects from the Kabul Museum, people and craftsmen, and important events
 - Approximately 1000 maps of Afghanistan which support research on Afghanistan





Photo: Joel van Houdt

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 ABLE, which aims to spread knowledge and encourage a culture of reading by making available reading materials 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 407,518 books to more than 240 schools and community libraries. Some 250 libraries managed by NGOs follow the ABLE model. Through the Support to the Police Reform, Literacy Unit – GIZ, ABLE placed 30 box-libraries (7500 ABLE publications) accessible

to an estimated 1800 police men and women in Balkh province. The libraries and books were distributed to all Police HQs and some Police City Districts of Balkh province.

To date, some 330 books (in Dari and Pashto) for new literates have been commissioned from Afghan authors and published, on subjects including mother-child care, agriculture, animal welfare, health, carpentry, 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. The users suggest most of the subjects for which the ABLE Editorial Board commissions authors to write the books.

Photo: Zenatullah Qanet



Photo: Fayaz Stanikzay

The expansion of ABLE services will entail the establishment of 30 new libraries during the period from 2016-19; along with updating existing 240 ABLE libraries with new materials. The new material will be produced as in-house publications and/or be purchased from commercial suppliers. ABLE will be commissioning an additional 30 titles over the period of three years to enrich its body of easy-to-read ABLE books.



Photo: Fayaz Stanikzay



Photo: Zenatullah Qanet

ACKU's Research Unit supports new and established Afghan scholars to acquire and develop the research skills necessary to design, carry out and disseminate an original research. ACKU's programme is focused on archival research and encourages the students to use the documents held in the ACKU archives.

ACKU's goal is to ensure that research and information on Afghanistan in Dari, Pashto and other languages is of high standard and more widely available to Afghan and international audiences.

To achieve this goal ACKU's Research Unit has the following objectives:

- To serve as a platform for seminars, conferences, debates and cultural events that showcase Afghan scholarship and expertise and international expertise on Afghanistan across a range of disciplines and fields.
- To create a pool of excellent young scholars conducting high quality academic research making use of ACKU's unique collections of original documents and publishing in internationally recognized, peer reviewed journals.
- To build a thriving network of Afghan and international scholars and students, which will lead to fruitful research collaborations

In the period 2016-19, 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 during the period.



Photo: Freshta Nehan



Photo: Jebrael Amin

ACKU prepare and deliver course on basics in qualitative and quantitative research methods in the social sciences (journalism, anthropology, economics, political science and sociology); and arts (cinema, literature, theatre). ACKU also provides workshops and mentoring for students wishing to publish in international peer-reviewed journals.

The Research Unit currently offers following courses and workshops:

- Critical reading and Critical thinking
- Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods
- Documentary Analysis
- Research Resources

The courses are announced in advance on the website (www.acku.edu.af) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/acku.edu.af>)

with information about how to apply and on pre-requisites. to apply/reserve a course for a group of academic staff or students, contact communications@acku.edu.af.

In addition, visiting scholars are very welcome to offer research courses/seminars/workshops on their area of special interest in the ACKU.



Photo: Freshta Nehan



Photo: Jebrael Amin

RESEARCH

Research Seminars

Part of the Research Unit's objectives is to bring together remarkable ideas and scholars doing research about Afghanistan, and invite them to share their research results with Kabul University students in order to improve the culture of academic research

in Afghanistan. In this way, students will learn about different methods and types of research that can lead to them to produce high quality academic research articles.



Photo: Jebrael Amin'



Photo: Jebrael Amin',



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RESEARCH

Research Facilities and Resources

ACKU has a Long Term Research Room where researchers can have a comfortable place to work with computer and internet facilities; they also have access to ACKU's collections which includes approximately one million pages of grey literature and unpublished material on the history, political, social and economic situation of Afghanistan. ACKU provides the most comprehensive collection of materials related to Afghanistan in the region.



Photo: Jebrail Amin

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

The Communications and Outreach department of ACKU carries out or hosts activities including workshops, lectures, seminars, debates, film screenings, exhibitions and public talks. The primary goal of these activities is to highlight ACKU's resources and the work of Afghan and international artists and scholars specializing on Afghanistan. ACKU publicizes these events and workshops widely to encourage the participation of large numbers of Afghans and others through ACKU's web site <https://www.acku.edu.af> and social media; <https://www.facebook.com/acku.edu.af>. ACKU has also developed relations with a network of private universities in Kabul, who use ACKU's resources.



Photo: David Gill

COMMUNICATIONS AND OUTREACH

Conference facility and Events

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.

Since 2103, ACKU conducted more than 100 public events, including exhibitions, public lectures, poetry slams, music concerts, etc. With a seating capacity of 200, the ACKU auditorium has the potential to reach out to at least 200 audiences, at any given event.

While ACKU supports staff and students of Kabul University and other government universities to organize events at free of cost, there is a charge for events organized by outside organizations. For more information contact Communications@acku.edu.af

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

A panel discussed on Afghanistan Civil Society – Peace and Expectations,

in collaboration with the Italian Civil Society network – Afghana.

Film Screening: Afghanistan post 2014 through the lenses of young Afghan filmmakers (23 October 2013)

Six short fiction films produced by young Afghan filmmakers under the British Council cultural program were screened, in front of the audience of 79 people.

Conference: Preserving Afghanistan's Cultural Heritage (9-11 September 2014)

A three day international conference co-organized with the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago and the Afghanistan National Museum, and funded by the US Embassy held at ACKU. The contributions were a fascinating overview of Afghanistan rich cultural heritage and the challenges facing those who wish to preserve it.



Photo: Jebrael Amin

Photographic Exhibition: Sandra Calligaro's Photographic Exhibition (19 October 2014)

French Ambassador, His Excellency, Ambassador Jean-Michel Marlaud opened the exhibition. The exhibition documented the Afghan middle class and offered an intimate look at Afghan society.

Book Launch: "Reconstructing Afghanistan" (24 November 2015)

The Book "Reconstructing Afghanistan" Edited by William Maley and Susanne Schmeidl was launched in ACKU, with the presence of large numbers of audience comprised of students from Kabul University and other private institutes in Kabul, Research scholars, diplomats including of Mr. Matt Anderson, the Australian Amba-

sador and Mrs. Noorjahan Mawani, the diplomatic representative of Agha Khan.

Public Lecture: The Writer, His Inspirations from Sacred Places and the Role of the Fiction in the Journeys' Tails – by Olivier Germain –Thomas (4 June 2016)

Professor Olivier from France spoke about his work as writer and his inspirations from sacred places and the role of the fiction in the journeys' tails to students of Kabul University.

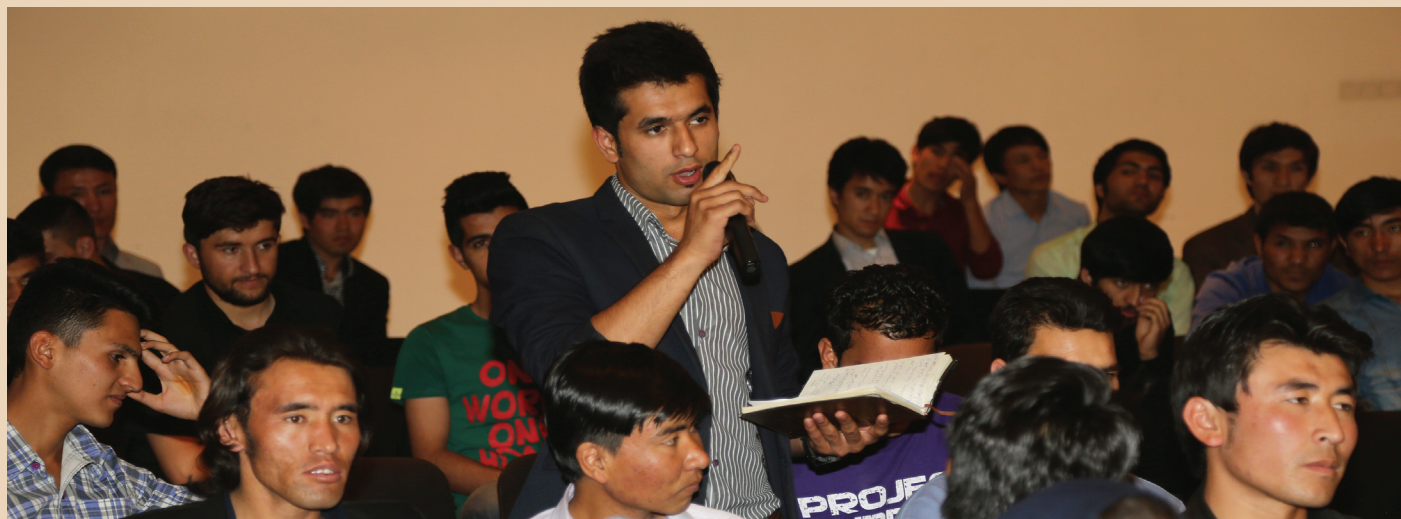


Photo: Jebrael Amin

COMMUNICATONS AND OUTREACH

Reach-out to Educational Institutes

To strengthen the outreach component, ACKU is reaching out to educational institutes nationally and internationally by launching ACKU stations (dedicated computer terminals) with access to ACKU's online databases. ACKU has established ACKU's station in many local universities including AUAF, Goharshad, Kardan, Sharq, Bamian; recently ACKU also established an ACKU's station at Jindal Global University, India.

During these field visits, we provide a detailed overview of ACKU research facilities and resources to students and teach them how to use ACKU online resources.

ACKU also provides Research Methods and Critical Reading workshops for university students in the provinces to improve the culture of research and reading.



Photo: Jebrail Amin

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Photo: Joel van Houdt



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