As of 1 March 2003, the Library collection had increased to 4,856 volumes. A total of 476 volumes were added during the year. The number of additions this year is double that of last year, which was 247 volumes. Donations of books were received from Mrs Anna Baker, Mrs Lorna Christofis, Mrs Valery Garrett, Mr Michael Guilford, Mrs Patricia Lim, Mrs Ann Marden, and Dr Dan Waters. We would like to thank all our donors and welcome future contributions of old and rare books or journals. The new additions are treasures for our Library.

Our Library has also been enriched by some very valuable and interesting gifts from a number of societies and institutions. Dr Patrick Hase brought back, from his visit to Shanghai Library, a superb copy of a two-volume reproduction of a series of nineteenth century Chinese woodcuts from Shanghai; the University Museum and Art Gallery of the University of Hong Kong sent us a beautiful booklet on The Lugard Tribute; the Siam Society contributed 34 issues of the National History Bulletin; the Cultural Institute of the Macao SAR Government contributed 91 issues of the Review of Culture; and the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities sent us their Bulletin as part of the newly established exchange programme.

With assistance from the Hong Kong Central Library, processing of the Arnold Graham Collection was finally completed. The Collection was donated by the late Arnold Graham in 1995 and sent to the City Hall Public Library directly without being catalogued. To facilitate access to this collection, efforts were made to process these materials soon after the move to the Central Library in 2001. About 77% of the records were successfully matched against University of Hong Kong Libraries’ records and the Hon. Librarian searched or did original cataloguing for the remaining titles. The Collection comprises a total of 423 volumes, with 361 volumes in English and 62 in Chinese. These are shelved as a separate section in the Rare Book Room and can now be searched through the online catalogue of the Hong Kong Central Library, RAS Collection.

A survey conducted last year on the Journal of the Hong Kong
Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society reviewed that all the major public libraries which include Hong Kong Central Library, libraries at City Hall, Kowloon, Shatin, Tuen Mun, Tsuen Wan and even the RAS Collection have incomplete holdings of the Journal. Since it is important to keep the Journal up-to-date, copies of all missing volumes, including the Indexes and Seminars, were provided to all the public libraries at the Society’s expense. While Hong Kong Central Library will continue to receive one free copy that comes with the Library’s institutional membership, payment will be made for renewals for the Journal for the other five branches.

It has been the normal practice of the Hong Kong Public Libraries to record subject talks conducted at their venues. Prior consent is sought from the speakers to do this. For legal protection, Council Members agreed that RAS speakers will also be requested to sign the same form for RAS lectures. In order to better preserve the content, it was decided that tapes of RAS speakers will be digitized if permission is granted. The Hong Kong Central Library has kindly offered, free of charge, to digitize these tapes since they are produced by the Library. The digitized version will be stored in the Multimedia Information System, available for convenient access in the larger Public Libraries via the System. The RAS Library will also be given one audio CD for each of the tape digitized for borrowing or archival purpose.

Hong Kong Central Library has also sent us a list of past recordings of all the RAS lectures held at City Hall Library, 78 in total dating back to 1988. Since none of the speakers had given consent to record their talks before and it would not be feasible to seek retroactive consent, it was agreed that while these tapes will be digitized for preservation purpose, the CDs will be placed in the RAS Collection in Rare Book Room, available for use in the Library but not for loan. The audio tapes will also be stored in the Rare Book Room, serving as back-ups.

Another digitization project that will be undertaken by RAS is a collection of old RTHK radio programmes related to the history of Asia and Hong Kong. Due to limited resources, these tapes probably will not be digitized by RTHK. In order to preserve the culture and heritage of Asia, Council members expressed interest and investigations will be conducted into the feasibility of digitization and projected demand for the finished project.
Access to HKU’s project: Hong Kong Journals Online (http://sunzi.lib.hku.hk/hkj/main.jsp) has been delayed for some time due to problems with the contractors responsible for the digitization process. The Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society was one of the first titles selected to be digitized for the project and I am pleased to advise that it is finally ready for access. As advised in the Society’s Newsletter in December 2002, premier release to the online version, providing table of contents plus selected full text with the authors’ consent, has been given to HKBRAS members. The Hong Kong Journals Online database will be officially open to the public when more content is available in the database. Members who wish to release copyright of their articles for posting on the Worldwide Web may notify the Society. We already have a member from Australia granting permission to digitize his articles after searching on the database.

Concerning usage of the RAS Collection, as compared to last year, reference enquiries had dropped by 22%. This could be due to the fact that members are now more familiar with the New Library. The pleasant environment and splendid facilities have attracted an increasing number of users. Books consulted increased by 33%, borrowers by 133%, and the number of books loaned out by 294%. Presently, there are no overdue books, except for the five old outstanding items which cannot be traced and which have been written off.

As reported by the Hong Kong Central Library, usage of the RAS Library for the period from 1 March 2002 to 28 February 2003 was as follows:

Library Usage

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No. of reference enquiries</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of books consulted</td>
<td>306</td>
<td>408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of borrowers</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of books loaned out</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>67</td>
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</tbody>
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I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to the Hong Kong Central Library for their great assistance during the year and for providing a fine home with well-equipped facilities for our Collection.

MS. JULIA CHAN
HON. LIBRARIAN
1 MARCH 2003
HONG KONG BRANCH
OF THE
ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY LIBRARY

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New Journals
