



Fig. 1: The Leiden University Library building.
(Photo courtesy of Leiden University Library, 2023)

The Indonesian Collection at the Leiden University Library

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The collection

The extensive Indonesian collection of UBL, known for its depth and breadth, traces its origins to the period of Dutch colonial rule in Indonesia. During this time, numerous documents, maps, and manuscripts were gathered by colonial administrators, scholars, bible translators, and the military. The collection was significantly expanded in 2012 and 2014, with, respectively, materials from the Royal Tropical Institute (KIT) and the world-renowned collection of the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV).

The Indonesian collection is remarkable not only for the breadth of its time span,¹ but also for its diversity. It includes various types of sources, spanning most disciplines and covering a wide range of topics in the humanities. It includes not only indigenous materials and narratives, but also documents relating to the administration of the Dutch East Indies colonial government, providing a record of governance and interaction with local communities. The collection is further enriched by the extensive scholarly output of both Western and Indonesian scholars,

The Leiden University Library (UBL), home to one of the world's most significant collections on Indonesia, stands as a vital resource for anyone delving into the historical, cultural, and social dynamics of Indonesia. As such it forms the counterpart to the collections kept at the National Library of Indonesia in Jakarta and other heritage institutions in Indonesia.

produced from the colonial period to the present day. The Jakarta branch of the UBL (KITLV-Jakarta, located on the grounds of the Dutch Embassy) acquires approximately 4500 modern Indonesian titles for the UBL each year.² Together, these sources provide invaluable insights into the socio-political and economic changes that have shaped modern Indonesia.

For Indonesians, engaging with these materials is not only an academic exercise but a journey towards understanding the roots and routes of Indonesian cultural and historical identity. The indigenous materials are valuable sources that help to reconstruct national history from a local perspective. Moreover, documents such as manuscripts, travel reports, newspapers, and ethnographic studies serve as a bridge connecting

current and past generations, facilitating a deeper appreciation and understanding of Indonesia's rich heritage and complex history.

Digital collections

Access to sources related to Indonesia extends beyond the physical confines of the library through UBL's extensive Digital Collections.³ With a commitment to accessibility and scholarly engagement, the library ensures that researchers worldwide can delve into the rich repository of Indonesian materials from the comfort of their own screens. Through the Digital Collections, users have access to, among other collections, 150,000 digitized photographs, 30,000 maps, and archival collections such as Kartini's letters, rubbings of Javanese

inscriptions, the Snouck Hurgronje papers, and a jukebox filled with popular Indonesian music from the 20th century. One of the latest additions consists of Indonesian newspapers and magazines from the period of World War II and the Revolution.⁴

A feast to the eye is found in the collection of 18th-century Malay letters from the sultans from Palembang, Jambi, and Siak. They are written on beautifully decorated gold printed paper and adorned with elegant calligraphy and royal seals. For those interested in learning about agricultural production in the extractive colonial economy or the renowned botanical gardens in Bogor, the 90 serials and 2500 colonial publications previously owned by KIT will provide valuable insights. And last but not least, the Digital Collections present four grand texts from Indonesia that have been inscribed in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register: the La Galigo epic poem (Sulawesi), the Chronicles of Diponegoro (Java), the *Hikayat Aceh*, and stories on the legendary Prince Panji (Java and Bali).

In addition to the Digital Collections, other digitised sources can be accessed via the online catalogue. For example, KITLV's digital documents include many frequently consulted works such as *Adatrechtbundels*, *Handelingen van den Volksraad*, and *De Indische Gids*. More recent printed material is also available online, such as reports and other publications by international and Indonesian NGOs and government agencies.

Continued overleaf

In addition, Google Books has digitised 500 of the library's rare early printed publications in Malay, Batak, Sundanese, and Javanese.⁵ Although the number of sources available online is large and continuously growing, it is still only a part of the total collection. This year, UBL has committed to increasing its digitisation efforts. Projects are underway to scan Batak and Palembang manuscripts and larger print collections.

The level of access to digitised sources varies, depending on copyright and data protection regulations. For example, some sources can only be accessed on computers in the library building.

The physical collections can be accessed by visiting the library in person. To use these resources, visitors need to register for a library card upon arrival. It is recommended to check the library's website for current visitor policies, opening hours, and any requirements for accessing specific materials, as some may need prior reservation or additional permissions due to their rarity or sensitivity. If you are planning to visit Leiden for a longer period of time, it is advisable to book your accommodation as early as possible, as supply is limited.

Research support services

UBL offers various research support services to assist users in navigating and utilising its collections. This includes reference services where librarians can guide users to relevant materials, as well as specialized support for those seeking to work with archival documents or manuscripts. The library provides digital tools to help users find specific items within its collections. The main portal is the online library catalogue. An online tutorial that familiarizes first-time visitors with the catalogue is found on the UBL website. For archival material a second search tool, Collections Guides,⁶ offers a full-text search in the archive inventories, thereby significantly enriching the search results. If you are looking for manuscripts, consulting older print catalogues and *Inventory of the Oriental Manuscripts of the Library of the University of Leiden* is advisable, besides searching in the online catalogue. You can access the print catalogues in Digital Collections, UBL Library Catalogues.⁷

Scanning machines are available for visitors to make digital images of microfilms, documents, and publications. Scans of fragile items such as manuscripts and historical newspapers can be requested by completing the digitisation request form on the UBL website.⁸ The website also provides information on visiting the library and using the collections, as well as contact details for South and Southeast Asia Curator Doris Jedamski, South and Southeast Asia Photography Curator Anouk Mansfeld, and Southeast Asia Subject Librarian Marije Plomp. If you have any questions about the collections or library services, you can use the 'Ask a Librarian' button on the home page.

Fellowships

The library's Scaliger Institute⁹ offers a range of fellowship programs. The Lingling Wiyadharmia Fellowship offers the opportunity to three scholars to spend up to three months conducting research using the Southeast Asian and particularly the Indonesian Special Collections at the Leiden University Library. Other fellowships of interest to researchers working with Indonesian materials include the Drewes Fellowship, Van de Sande Fellowship, Brill Fellowship, and Elsevier Fellowship for Digital Scholarship. Information on terms, conditions, and application procedures are available on the library's website.¹⁰ Below, two former Lingling Wiyadharmia fellows from 2023, Muhammad Haidar Izzudin and Mohammad Refi Omar Ar Razy, share their experiences doing research in UBL's collections.

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Fig. 2: Balinese drawing by I Madé Tlaga, depicting Surada, the palm wine maker, sitting in a tree. He annoys a tiger while another man, called Walacit, watches the scene. Nineteenth Century. UBL, Or. 3390:182.



Fig. 3: Local heads with their servants, South Sulawesi, circa 1910. UBL, KITLV 31010.

Notes

- This span ranges from a 9th-century AD Old Javanese inscription to the latest publications in a variety of languages from and about Indonesia. However, the main part of the colonial collection consists of material from the mid-19th century AD until the mid-20th century AD.
- In addition, the Jakarta branch office acquires 700 to 800 modern titles annually from Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei
- <https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl>.
- This digital collection was donated by NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam. <https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/view/collection/niod>.
- Searching for "Google Book-collectie" in the online catalogue with the use of the catalogue's language filter will bring up these titles. <https://catalogue.leidenuniv.nl>.
- <https://collectionguides.universiteitleiden.nl>.
- <https://digitalcollections.universiteitleiden.nl/librarycatalogues>.
- Information on the ordering process and costs is available on the website.
- <https://www.library.universiteitleiden.nl/special-collections/scaliger-institute>.
- <https://www.library.universiteitleiden.nl/special-collections/fellowships>.