



**Five-Year Plan (FY21-25)**  
**South Asia Open Archives (SAOA)**

This document lays out the Five-Year Plan (FY21-25) for the South Asia Open Archives (“SAOA”, available at [saoa.crl.edu](http://saoa.crl.edu)). This strategic planning document describes SAOA’s vision and strategy for the period of July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2025, establishing the short- and long-term goals related to governance and administration, membership, collection building, infrastructure, funding, and budget.

The Five-Year Plan contains the following sections:

- Background
  - [About SAOA](#)
  - [Summary of First Five Years](#)
  - [Legal Status, Governance, and Administration](#)
- Five-Year Strategic Plan (FY21-25)
  - [Membership](#)
  - [Expanded Selection of Materials](#)
  - [Enhanced Technical Infrastructure](#)
  - [Sustainability through Robust Financial Plan](#)

**BACKGROUND**

**About SAOA**

South Asia Open Archives is a free open-access resource for research and teaching — a rich and growing curated collection of key historical and contemporary sources in arts, humanities and social sciences, from and about South Asia, in English and various languages throughout the region. SAOA's collections contain hundreds of thousands of pages of books, journals, newspapers, census data,

magazines, and documents, currently organized around the themes of Social & Economic History, Literature, Women & Gender, and Caste & Social Structure.

SAOA is the product of a collaborative initiative undertaken by a broad consortium of member research libraries in South Asia and around the world. SAOA is enriched by substantial contributions of content, human and material resources from a community of libraries, research centers, archives and other institutions partnering to make these resources openly accessible for global scholarship and pedagogy. Administratively hosted by the Center for Research Libraries (CRL), and situated as a subset of the South Asia Materials Project (SAMP), SAOA is presented online for open access with the advanced database functionalities and user-friendly features that result from partnering with [JSTOR](#). For further information on SAOA, please visit the [CRL webpage](#).

### **Summary of First Five Years**

SAOA built a solid foundation over the first five years. Major accomplishments include:

- Published over 20,000 items comprising 600,000 pages
- Digitized over 750,000 pages
- Selected and adopted a robust discovery interface, JSTOR Forum
- Recruited members and established trusted relationships
- Secured funding from Title VI South Asia Centers
- Established specifications and processes for digitization, transfer, ingest, and publishing
- Strengthened the workflow among the Executive Board, Working Groups, and CRL Staff
- Implemented and executed a communications plan
- Gave presentations and workshops to librarians and scholars worldwide

## **Legal Status, Governance, and Administration**

The [Center for Research Libraries](#) (CRL) serves as the legal, administrative, and fiscal home of SAOA. CRL is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization, incorporated in the State of Illinois in 1949 and governed by a Board of Directors. CRL is accountable to more than 200 voting member institutions, primarily consisting of academic and independent research libraries in the United States and Canada. Additionally, CRL has a strong record of encouraging and supporting digitization of area studies materials.

The SAOA [Executive Board](#) was originally established as a standing committee of the South Asia Materials Project (SAMP). SAOA is currently led by an elected Executive Board which is a standing committee of the South Asia Materials Project (SAMP). As such, SAOA follows the bylaws of SAMP. The Executive Board collaborates with and leads the Working Groups on [Digitization](#), [Infrastructure](#), and [Funding](#) to organize and lead SAOA activities. The Executive Board selects a Chair (or Co-Chairs) from among its members for a two-year term. The SAOA Executive Board consists of:

- Three representatives elected by the SAOA membership, each with a term of three years in a staggered rotation;
- The SAMP Chairperson or designee (non-voting ex officio);
- A representative from CRL (non-voting ex officio).

CRL employs a Program Manager to coordinate and oversee all aspects of SAOA. The SAOA Program Manager reports to CRL's Area Studies Program Manager. The Program Manager performs an array of functions, including managing the digitization workflow, ingesting images and metadata, coordinating the activities of the Executive Board and Working Groups, maintaining and distributing program documentation, and communicating externally about SAOA. SAOA may hire additional staff members to advance SAOA's mission. Staff will be hired by CRL and CRL's associated expenses will be compensated by SAOA.

## **FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN (FY21-25)**

### **Membership**

The foundation of SAOA is inter-institutional collaboration and its impact is achieved through an inclusive diversity of members. Fostering meaningful collaboration while recognizing difference necessitates a variety of pathways to membership but the benefits are the same for all members. Simultaneous membership in SAOA's parent body, SAMP (South Asia Materials Project), is a prerequisite for membership in SAOA and all membership terms are for a period of five years.

**Member Categories.** All institutions that can are strongly encouraged to support SAOA at the Category 1 level. SAOA is committed to the principles of and opportunities afforded by open access, yet relies on robust funding, content contribution and staffing support to complete its mission. Given the varying resources among institutions and our commitment to inclusion, SAOA has created membership categories in order to invite participation from as wide an array of institutions and stakeholders as possible.

Below, we define some general criteria to differentiate between the categories and to help South Asia librarians, scholars and local stakeholders try to advocate with their institutions for SAOA membership at a level appropriate to their own institution. Institutions may qualify under a certain membership category based on the contributions they are able to make, but the following factors may be considered locally for seeking an appropriate level:

- **Possible characteristics of Category 1 members might include one or more of these:**
  - Library staff dedicated to South Asia
  - Well-established, robust annual South Asia library materials budgets

- Historically strong South Asia collections
- Significant South Asia-related course offerings, research, and programs
- **Possible characteristics of Category 2 members might include one or more of these:**
  - Limited staffing dedicated to South Asia
  - Moderate annual South Asia materials budgets
  - Some South Asia-specific course offerings, research or programs; or individual scholars with strong South Asia research or teaching interests
- **Possible characteristics of Category 3 members might include one or more of these:**
  - Small or no budgets dedicated to South Asia; or small or no funds to dedicate to collaborative open-access projects
  - Very limited or no staffing dedicated to South Asia
  - Some South Asia teaching and research interest
  - Some significant or unique South Asia holdings in their collections

**Contributions.** There are three types of memberships at different levels of contribution:

- **Category 1 Members** contribute a minimum of \$25,000 paid over five years. Additional optional contributions may include digital assets, vetted by SAOA and/or contributions of staff time for SAOA activities and services.
- **Category 2 Members** contribute a minimum of \$20,000 paid over five years). Additional optional contributions may include digital assets, vetted by SAOA, and/or contributions of staff time for SAOA activities and services.
- **Category 3 Members** contribute a minimum of \$10,000 paid over five years, **OR** creation and contribution of a substantial amount of content in the form of new digital assets (minimum 500 digital

volumes over five years), vetted by SAOA, ***AND/OR*** substantial contributions of staff time for SAOA activities and services.

**Benefits.** All SAOA Members are eligible to:

- Stand for election to serve on the SAOA Executive Board.
- Serve on Working Groups on Digitization, Infrastructure, and Funding.
- Vote in the SAOA Executive Board elections.
- Provide input on SAOA decisions and documentation.

### **Expanded Selection of Materials**

Under the Second 5-year Plan, SAOA will continue building diverse and meaningful collections to support a broad range of research on South Asia. The work of the Digitization Working Group is informed by two important documents when making selection decisions: (1) an evolving set of [Selection Guidelines](#) (expanding content foci for themes and resource types); and (2) [Selection Principles](#) (collection development guidelines). These documents help focus collection development around thematic areas and provide a rationale for making informed selection decisions.

Over the next five years, SAOA seeks to expand the scope of its curated collections, pursuant to the updated Selection Guidelines:

- Increasing the **geographic** focus on underrepresented countries and states.
- Diversifying the **language** representation.
- Expanding the **thematic collections**.
- Widening the **date coverage** to include post-colonial and contemporary materials.
- Presenting more **file formats** such as audio (music), visual (art), data, and maps.

## **Enhanced Technical Infrastructure**

SAOA requires innovative and efficient approaches to the digitization and discovery of key resources. Over the next five years, SAOA will upgrade its hosting, presentation, and preservation infrastructure in order to facilitate the growth of the collections and the evolving needs of researchers of all types.

In the coming years, SAOA will do the following:

1. Work with Ithaka on platform enhancements, including support for the user experience, display, ingest, and discoverability.
  - a. Enhance South Asian “collections as data” by enabling text mining of content.
  - b. Enhance non-roman OCR.
  - c. Enhance support for non-textual file formats (images, data sets, geospatial data, audio files), and additional thematic collections.
2. Seek continual improvement of internal processes and workflows in the areas of quality control, decision-making structures, and ingest.
3. Research, select, and implement a preservation archive for long term storage of files following the established [Digital File Management](#) policies.
4. Make SAOA content discoverable through OCLC WorldCat.
5. Create workflow efficiencies around metadata crosswalks and ingest.

## **Sustainability through Robust Financial Plan**

SAOA is committed to ensuring long term financial sustainability in order to continue expanding its open access collections and developing its discovery platform. SAOA will distribute a robust financial plan in FY21. However, given the potential impacts on libraries’ budgets brought about by COVID-19, SAOA may need to make strategic budget decisions over the coming years regarding funds allocated for digitization, infrastructure, and staffing.

Based on SAOA's budget projections (shared with members on an annual basis), here is a conservative budget scenario for FY21-25 if we maintain the membership status quo.

- Total revenue for FY21-25 of **\$597,500** + surplus carryover from FY19 of **\$49,582.85 = \$647,082.85**
- Total expenses for FY21-25 = **\$655,920**
- Projected deficit for FY21-25 = **(-\$8,837.15)**

These are the key assumptions underlying SAOA's budget projections. Using these assumptions, SAOA is in a relatively break-even state for the next five years.

- **Revenue**
  - \$110,000 in membership fees per year (based on maintaining the current number of 22 Member Libraries)
  - \$23,750 has been committed by Title VI Centers for FY21 and FY22
- **Expenses**
  - \$25,000 annually for digitization projects
  - Infrastructure:
    - \$12,000 for annual JSTOR fee
    - No costs have been estimated for other Infrastructure-related items:
      - Preservation archiving
      - Adding SAOA records to WorldCat
  - \$94,184 for same level of Administrative support (one full-time employee's salary, benefits, and travel to AAS annually; CRL \$8,000, shipping, and other business expenses)
- **Surplus/Deficit**
  - SAOA projects a small deficit for FY21-25 (-\$8,837.15)
  - Eliminating staff travel costs will result in savings of \$7,000 during FY21-25 (or \$1,500 per year)
  - As SAOA incurs additional expenses for the infrastructure items not yet estimated here, we will need to add commensurate revenue



- It is possible that SAOA will receive additional funding through grants, financial contributions supporting individual projects, and/or additional contributions from Title VI Centers.
- **Projected Capacity**
  - Pursuant to the goals laid out in the FY21-25 Five-Year Plan, SAOA's capacity is contingent upon maintaining its projected revenue over the next five years, through receiving financial membership contributions and/or other sources of funding. This funding will allow for:
    - Employing a full-time staff member
    - Digitizing 750,000-1,000,000 pages of content
    - Hosting the collections and enhancing the technical infrastructure

SAOA will continue monitoring its budget and seeking additional funding, while ensuring the responsible stewardship of its members' funds. SAOA has laid a foundation for success and hopes to continue making progress toward long term sustainability of this collaborative project.

Prepared by: SAOA Executive Board and Working Groups on Digitization, Funding, and Infrastructure (June 12, 2020)