

THE MOVE: new premises for the research centre in Ankara

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For many years now, it had been obvious that the premises at Tahran Caddesi 24, home to the BIAA for 36 years, no longer responded to the needs of the Institute's research centre. Although ingenious solutions were sought – and found – to 'cram' incoming publications onto the shelves in the library or even off-site, the space was filling up rapidly. BIAA scholars and fellows no longer had proper spaces to work and, although we did organise events at the premises, the available space was once again far from ideal. In addition, the ever-increasing financial burden of the rent for the premises had to be taken into account. However, because we were all so attached to the building – which represents one of the last well-preserved examples of Ankara domestic architecture from the 1950s – and its wonderful garden we pushed aside this sword of Damocles dangling over our heads for as long as possible. When a partially arranged 'deal' on establishing a co-location with another Ankara-based research institute fell through though, we decided it was time to take a deep breath, start scouting the available properties and 'do the maths'.

As soon as we – that is, the Ankara management team composed of Gülgün Girdivan, Leonidas Karakatsanis and Lutgarde Vandeput – were shown two floors in a larger building at Atatürk Bulvarı 154 by the real-estate agents, we agreed that we could 'see' the BIAA there. Most importantly, the second floor was one large open-plan space, where the library would fit beautifully. Together, both floors amount to over 900m², which is considerably more than the old premises. Last but not least, the rent was notably lower than what the BIAA was paying for the old premises.

Once permission was sought and gained from the Institute's trustees and the British Academy, we secured a ten-year lease and started planning the renovation of the new location. In February, building work began and the finishing touches were still being executed when the first removal trucks rolled onto the driveway. Gülgün kept a close eye on the budget and it was a huge relief to all of us that the Wolfson Foundation granted us £50,000 for the renovation of the library and the conference room.

One of the major challenges we faced was planning and implementing the move of the library and its 65,000 volumes. A principal advantage of the move to new premises was certainly the opportunity to redesign the library space from scratch. At Tahran 24, library readers had to navigate through a labyrinth of different rooms spread over several floors in order to locate a book. This complexity could now give way to the simplicity of one open-space library floor where all the books and journals could be shelved on the



Nihal Uzun and Burçak Delikan packing books.

basis of the existing classification system. The ability to design the library space anew also gave us the opportunity to introduce a ten-year projected-growth plan in order to accommodate new acquisitions.

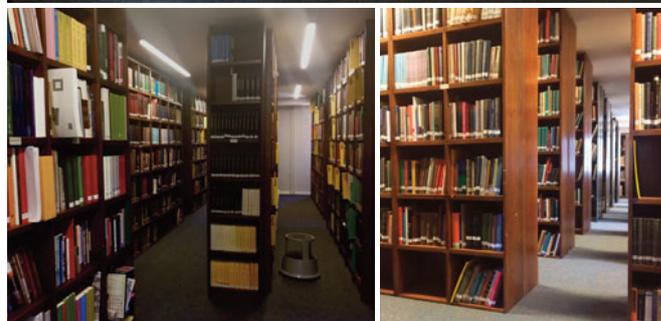
However, this major advantage of having a newly designed space created a significant challenge with regards to the logistics of the move itself, since the books – following removal from their spots on the shelves of Tahran 24 – could not simply be transferred to the same locations on the same shelves in the new premises. Thus, reshelving had to be planned as a totally separate process for the entire collection.

A four-tiered process was designed to tackle the task. We envisioned that, in the first stage, books would be boxed and tagged according to the BIAA library classification system. Then the condition of the existing shelves was to be assessed. Some shelves would be identified for repair, some would be replaced and some new shelves, matching the existing system in terms of quality and style, would be ordered. A third projected stage consisted of moving all the existing shelving to the new premises and arranging it according to the new design for the space. The fourth and final phase of the process would then be to send the books and journals from Tahran 24 in reverse alphabetical order of the classification system and start reshelving.

However, we soon realised this plan wouldn't work. The space restrictions at the old premises, with its narrow corridors, many small rooms, various floors and minimal open space, forced us, in consultation with the removal company, to adopt a different strategy which involved the simultaneous implementation of three of our four planned stages (boxing books *and* moving shelves *and* moving books). This made the calculation of space allocation for boxes and shelves at the new premises a highly demanding task! The BIAA staff in full force – including the Director, Assistant Director, librarians, fellows, scholars and caretakers – were separated into teams located in both the old and the new premises, and worked non-stop to assess shelves,



Team work: team Sergio, Burcak and Nihal.



The creation of the new library space.

organise 'islands' of boxed books at the new premises according to the various sections of the library classification system and maintain some vital working space for unpacking and shelving. Everybody lent a hand by lifting or marking a box, or moving one shelf to find another matching one and positioning them side by side. All got dusty and exhausted. But we also all agreed that it was a true bonding experience and, at times, even fun! The images accompanying this piece demonstrate all of this. Special reference must be made here to the 2018 BIAA Research Scholar, Sergio Russo; his input and impact on the library's move cannot be overestimated.

Once all the shelves had been arranged, the detailed work of unpacking the books, checking them against the catalogue and reshelving them started. Thankfully, volunteers from Hacetepe, Gazi, Ankara and Bilkent universities were on hand to help. They made a real difference to the speed with which shelving proceeded. Understandably, some glitches emerged and new shelves had to be ordered – and made by the carpenter at full speed; but these minor inconveniences were easily overcome. Meanwhile, the librarians organised their brand-new offices and by mid-August the new library opened its doors to full members. Since the beginning of September, the library has been fully functional once again.



All hands on deck!



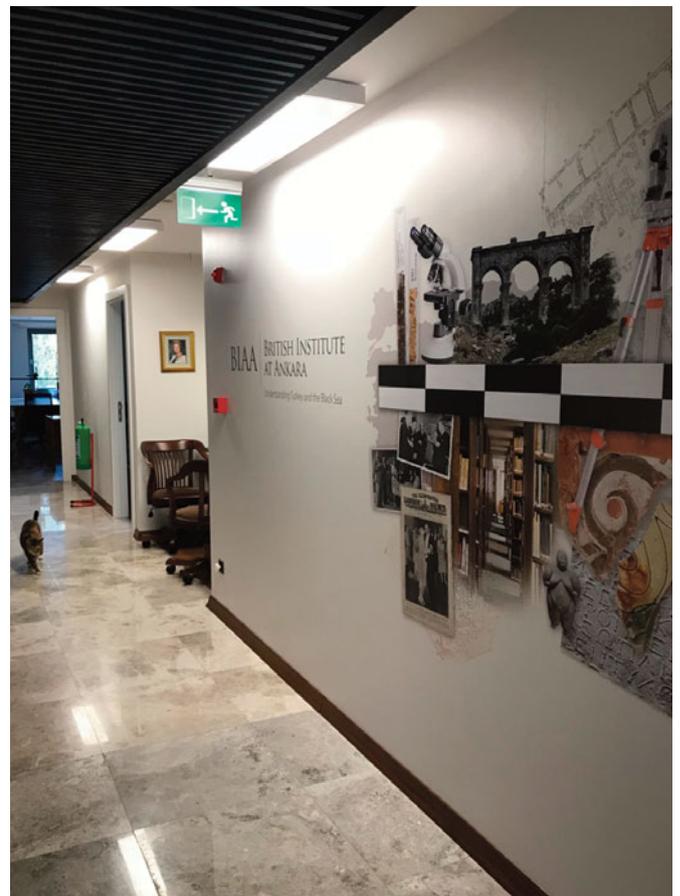
The pottery collection: time to start unpacking!

On the same floor, one large room was created to house the collections of historical maps, squeezes and the physical photographic archive. This is a very airy and pleasant space that has also served as the office of the Digital Repository Manager since the beginning of November. You can read more on the repository elsewhere in this volume.

Meanwhile, although the library certainly posed the largest challenge, the other resource collections also had to be moved. The available funding allowed us to acquire mobile archival shelving units for the ceramics collection. Ben Irvine, who was at the BIAA on a short-term contract to complete the photographic recording of the ceramic collection, single-handedly oversaw the packing and moving of the whole ceramics collection. He did not shy away from helping with the actual lifting of it either – to such an extent that the removalists suggested he come and work with them! Ben also undertook the entire reorganisation of the ceramic collection in the new units, and the result is fabulous.

The new premises are spacious enough to house also the BIAA's palaeobotanical and archaeozoological collections. These were previously stored in the 'lab-flat', a separate unit on Büklüm Sokak, about 300m from Tahran Caddesi 24. This not only means an additional saving in rent, it also has the additional benefits that the collections are under much closer control and that scholars coming to use them are now properly part of the academic community here. We faced several hurdles in moving these collections. First, the lease on Büklüm Sokak ended in March. We therefore had to move the contents of the lab-flat much earlier than and separately from those of the main premises. The contents of the flat were thus moved into the designated laboratory space, but before the renovation of the premises was completed. So they remained stored away and plastic-protected for several months. Unpacking the glass tubes with the seeds was a delicate business, but we managed.

With relief, we realised that there was, at most, only very little damage! For the organisation of the archaeozoological collection, we had help from Gamze Durdu, a Masters student at the Middle East Technical University specialising in archaeozoology. Her presence made a huge difference and we would like to take this opportunity to thank her for helping us out.



The entrance to the new premises.

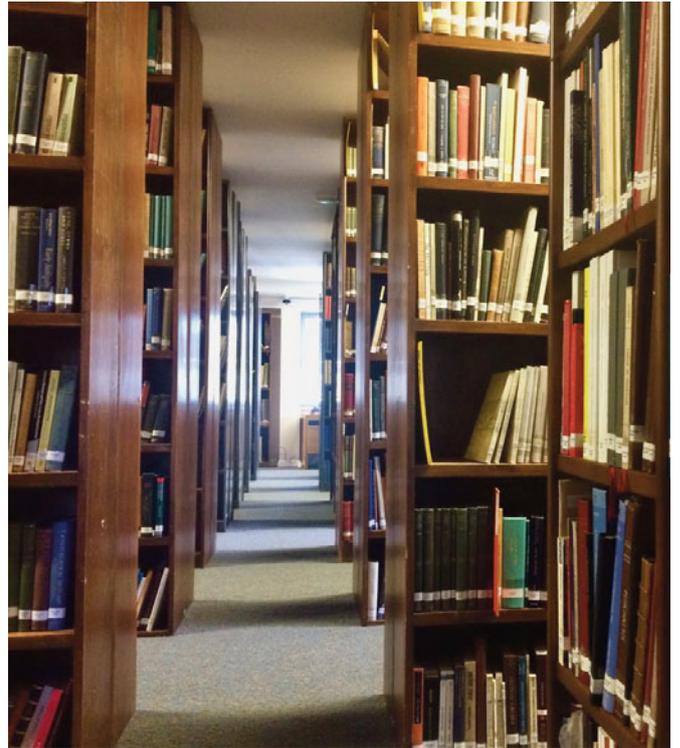
A further important asset of the ‘New BIAA’ is the conference room, or – as it is officially named – the BIAA Wolfson Foundation Conference Room. It was indeed thanks to the Foundation’s grant that we were able to refurbish the space. The room is actually ‘multi-functional’. On a day-to-day basis, it serves as the BIAA tea room. Two evening lectures have already taken place, and we can seat up to 70–75 people. The space can also be used for workshops with a limited number of participants since we can convert it into a room housing one large or several smaller conference tables.

In all, we feel that the new premises provide a solid base from which to face new challenges. The new offices are not only light and spacious, there is also room to house more scholars than we have today. The BIAA Wolfson Foundation Conference Room provides us with a splendid in-house location for events, workshops and even small symposia, and is already significantly increasing the public visibility of the Institute. It also provides UK HEI researchers in search of a location for workshops and events in Turkey with a base at an established British institution. The new arrangement of the library is more user-friendly than ever before and it has space to accommodate new acquisitions for at least ten years, and probably many more. The Wolfson Foundation grant allowed us to acquire new furniture for readers and increase the number of spaces available for library users. A reader-satisfaction survey executed before the move revealed additional seating as one of the main demands.

Furthermore, reorganisation of the working hours of the librarians has allowed us to increase the opening times for students. It is satisfying that, since the opening of the library, quite a few new members have signed up already.

Last, but not least, having the digital repository office housed in the new premises will enable the BIAA to build solutions for the digitisation of large-scale physical archives in Turkey and the surrounding region.

We would love the opportunity to welcome you to our wonderful new premises, or, in Turkish, *bekleriz!*



The library.



The BIAA Wolfson Foundation Conference Room.



The library reading room.