

Newsletter

December 2019

DRISA in short

DRISA plans to present, on the internet, a searchable catalogue of the Transnet Image collection, with a thumbnail of each image, freely accessible to railway and history researchers all over the world.

DRISA provides raw thumbnails with brief descriptions. Images are not cropped or enhanced, with no attempt to remove duplicates. Should images be required for illustration or publication, the high-resolution versions are available from the Transnet Heritage Library (THL). Users can digitally restore and enhance the images to suit their own purposes.

Since the previous newsletter...

In the two months since the previous newsletter in September 2019, more progress was made:

- A further 60 issues of the monthly SAR&H Magazine (1941 to 1945) were published on the internet, taking the total number of available pages to over 60 000. All these pages are now electronically searchable, thanks to optical character recognition (OCR) expertise provided by Embedded IQ (see www.eiq.co.za). Publication of the SAR&H Magazine came to an end in 1967, which means that about another 50 000 pages in 200 issues remain to be scanned and processed.
- Scanning of photographs continued and about 4000 new images were uploaded to the internet. A more detailed breakdown of the progress follows on the next page.
- The “Monday volunteers” spent the last few months organising the collection donated by the late Frank Garrison, railway photographer. This collection was stored in different parts at different places. It is now being catalogued as a single coherent collection which will hopefully be digitised next year.
- Olwyn Garratt, experienced law librarian, joined the “Monday volunteers” and is cataloguing the MDOC Collection, which consists mainly of unpublished railway materials such as train tickets, permits, menus, correspondence, etc.
- Leith Paxton, well known railway enthusiast and author, joined the pool of volunteers to assist in describing the many images of locomotives, coaches and wagons for which no

information was available, working from his home through the internet platform. Leith's involvement brings one of the dreams of DRISA in motion, namely to build an online platform where experts from all over the world can make their contributions.

- DRISA found a new internet home. All the different parts of DRISA (magazine, photos and documents) are now brought together, hosted by Embedded IQ (www.eiq.co.za).
- The AtoM database was upgraded from version 2.4.1 to the latest version 2.5.2.

A big thank you to Afrihost!

When DRISA started to look for an internet host about three years ago, the well known SA internet provider Afrihost stepped in and generously kept the AtoM database running for the past three years. Many thanks to Afrihost and its directors for the sponsorship, and to all the support personnel who so kindly assisted in resolving all the IT problems during this time.

New towns

Visitors to the DRISA site (www.drisa.co.za) will notice numerous new pictures for Paarl, Swellendam, Uitenhage and Springs.

Progress by numbers

The overall progress made by DRISA is summarised in the following table:

Collection	LS	LG	M	N	P	PB	R	total
Missing	8	0	25	1757	42	11	4	1847
Not for AtoM	407	0	142	626	275	26	0	1476
Uploaded	1352	98	563	11828	4228	2350	1500	21919
In process	2	0	1667	59	1416	34	0	3178
No scans yet	0	0	77623	34152	2253	154	0	114182
total	1769	98	80000	48422	8214	2575	1504	142602

For the collections listed, the DRISA project is therefore about 15% of the way. The collections where scanning has not yet begun, are not shown in the table and include collections such as the CS (colour slides), CN (colour negatives), albums, Garrison, Durrant and other special collections.

The future of DRISA

DRISA was established in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding which allowed three years of cooperation between Transnet Freight Rail and the South African Institution of Civil Engineering. This allowed DRISA to develop from an idea of a few to a serious project with some impressive practical dimensions, already of great use to Transnet to field the numerous national and international enquiries. Many researchers, authors and filmmakers have used DRISA and expressed their support and appreciation. There can be little argument about whether DRISA should be continued or not. It is now the time to determine the shape of DRISA for the next phase and to formulate a new Memorandum of Understanding accordingly. The needs of a future DRISA are twofold.

Financial

The total expenditure of DRISA up to now was about R220 000, currently running at about R2 000 per month. The money is only used for weekly payments to the assistants in the THL who deal with the scanning of magazine pages and photographs – all other contributions come free of charge by volunteers. Despite smaller contributions throughout, for which we are very grateful, finances remain a serious bottleneck. With three years of experience and tangible evidence of progress, renewed efforts are required to secure better sponsorship.

Administrative

In order to attract more substantial funding, the DRISA project must be registered as a public benefit organisation (PBO) first, whereafter it must obtain a certificate from the Receiver of Revenue to make financial contributions tax-deductible.

DRISA appeals to its pool of supporters to find volunteers to assist with fundraising and the registration of DRISA as a PBO, or for anyone with corporate experience to advise us on how to professionalise DRISA with an eye on the future. This is critical to the continuation of the project, which hopes to resume at full speed in February 2020.

There is also a technical need to scan the approximately 20 000 35mm colour slides. If there are any volunteers with specialised slide scanners wishing to participate, please contact us to explore the possibility of getting the slides to you for scanning.

Contact details

For questions and comments, please contact Johannes Haarhoff at johannes@haarhoff.org.za, Yolanda Meyer at Yolanda.meyer@transnet.net or visit www.drisa.co.za .

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