AGAPS
Association for Gulf and Arabian Peninsula Studies

KUWAIT RESEARCH RESOURCE GUIDE

Prepared by Alex Boodrookas, assistant professor in the Department of History at Metropolitan State University of Denver [1]
Additional Contributors[2]

GENERAL SUGGESTIONS:

- Bring copies of a letter of introduction from your home institution, with as many official stamps and signatures as possible.
- A similar letter and official affiliation from a hosting Kuwaiti institution can also be helpful.
- Photo identification is needed at most research centers.
- Kuwaiti weekends are Friday and Saturday.

Table of Contents

1. National Library of Kuwait 1
2. Center for Gulf and arabian peninsula studies, Kuwait University 2
3. Center for Research and Studies on Kuwait 2
4. Babtain Poetry Library 3
5. Chamber of Commerce and Industry Library 3
6. National Assembly Library 3
7. Youm al Bahar Bookshop 4
8. Kuwait Book Fair 4
9. Digitized records 4
10. Mirror house museum 5
11. Sultan gallery 5
12. Other Centers for Regional Research 5

1. NATIONAL LIBRARY OF KUWAIT

- **Location**: Gulf Road, a few doors down from the National Assembly building and beside Beit Sadou (which has a nice textile museum and coffee shop).
- **Operating hours**: Most research sections open 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. during weekdays.
- **What to bring**: Photo ID

---

[1] alexboodrookas@gmail.com. This guide is designed for scholars conducting research in Kuwait, based on of my dissertation research experience from 2016-2018. It is not at all definitive, as it has inevitably been shaped by my own interests and positionality. I expect that others will face different difficulties and be interested in different things.

[2] Elizabeth Derderian, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Anthropology. Northwestern University ederderian@u.northwestern.edu

- **Contact details**: (965) 2292 9803
- **Website**: https://www.nlk.gov.kw/
- **Resources & Notes**:

The Library holds a somewhat helpful research collection in Arabic on general subjects, but particular use is the "Kuwaituna" room on the second (U.S. third) floor. This includes effectively any published material that is about, from, or related to Kuwait.

A second valuable resource is the newspaper section on the first (U.S. second) floor. This holds a large number of old Kuwaiti newspapers, dating from the mid-twentieth century. Note that many are located in an easily-overlooked corner on movable shelves, which usually need to be forced open manually by the researcher. Photographs of newspapers are allowed with permission.

On the second (U.S. third) floor is a library containing the donated libraries of a number of deceased prominent individuals, and the "National Archives." This researcher failed to gain access to any unique materials there, and the room is sometimes entirely empty. Others may have better luck.

2. CENTER FOR GULF AND ARABIAN PENINSULA STUDIES, KUWAIT UNIVERSITY

- **Location**: At the Shuwaikh campus of Kuwait University, which unfortunately suffers from interminable traffic that peaks approximately at the same time the archive closes in the early afternoon.
- **Hours**: Weekdays, approximately 7:30 a.m. – 2 p.m., and evenings (check on arrival)
- **What to bring**: A photo ID
- **Contact Details**: (965) 2498 4639
- **Resources & Notes**:

The Center's resources are divided into two rooms. The first, located to the right of the entrance, contains a large and eclectic collection of published materials on the Gulf. These include books, theses, government publications, old city plans, reports, and reprinted newspapers and magazines. There is a card catalog, and many of the books are organized by subject, but the filing system has apparently been breaking down for some time and the back room in particular can be difficult to navigate. A manual search will sometimes uncover useful material.

The second room contains a remarkable archive of newspaper clippings, sorted by subject, that date back to the sixties. There is a comprehensive catalog, although certain subjects are missing or misfiled. Nearly all are in Arabic. Because of the subject sorting, this archive is perfectly suited for a short research trip dedicated to a particular topic.

Note that you will be expected to sign in every day. Photographs are technically supposed to cost 20 fils per page. Due to the dust, wearing light colors is inadvisable.

3. CENTER FOR RESEARCH AND STUDIES ON KUWAIT

- **Location**: Downtown next to the Behbehani Building (a useful landmark for cab drivers).
- **Hours**: Open weekday mornings and evenings
- **What to bring**: Photo ID
- **Contact Details**: (965) 2221 0876 or (965) 2221 0898

- **Website**: http://www.crsk.edu.kw/en/AboutCRSK.aspx
- **Resources & Notes**:

The most valuable sources at the center are its publications, most of which are republished newsletters and magazines from various Kuwaiti clubs and associations in the fifties and sixties. It has also republished and translated a variety of oral histories, memoirs, sea captain diaries, and secondary works. These publications can be purchased, but if you can meet with higher-level staff, they are often given free to visiting researchers. They also have a large library of Gulf and Kuwait-related works.

According to reliable reports – and their own newsletter – they hold a wealth of donations from private individuals and state institutions that are not accessible to the public. Attempts to gain access may be rejected. The head of the Center, Abdullah al Ghanim, said that all of the important documents have been published, but you can inquire about other documents if you have reason to believe they are stored in the center. The Center appears to be energetically collecting documents

4. BABTAIN POETRY LIBRARY

- **Location**: Downtown Kuwait city. Note that parking is miserable if you can't get a spot inside their lot, so it may be easier to park on the Gulf road and walk.
- **Hours**: Standard mornings and evenings, check on arrival
- **What to bring**: Photo ID
- **Contact Details**: (965) 2247 4010 – 2247 4011 – 2247 4012
- **Website**: http://www.albabtainlibrary.org.kw/new/en/about.php
- **Resources & Notes**:

Contains a library focusing on literature and poetry, including sections donated by various prominent people and a small "rare book" collection. Also includes republished literary magazines and periodicals from around the Arabic-speaking world. Mainly useful for students of literature.

5. CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY LIBRARY

- **Location**: On the first (U.S. second) floor of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Building, downtown Kuwait City.
- **Hours**: Weekday mornings; afternoon possible
- **What to bring**: Photo ID
- **Resources & Notes**:

The library contains a decent selection of titles on general Kuwaiti history, with a focus on economic history. It also contains a nearly full print run of *Kuwait al Youm* and its own publication, in addition to translated Arabic titles on economic subjects and some Kuwait government publications. Rules on photography and other issues seem vague.

6. NATIONAL ASSEMBLY LIBRARY

- **Location**: In the Majlis al Umma complex on Gulf Road
- **Hours**: By appointment. Gaining access can be challenging. Call the Assembly well ahead of time or ask a local contact (such as the local embassy) if they can help you arrange it.

- **What to bring**: They will ask for an ID, and the guards at the security gate will stop you from entering without an official appointment.
- **Website**: http://www.kna.kw/clt-html5/index.asp
- **Resources & Notes**:

The National Assembly has a large library of secondary sources, including some Arabic-language books and periodicals on Law from a number of countries. Its unique resources are in a second room, which holds debates, laws, reports, and other publications from the Assembly. This, however, is all online on their website. So other than the books, most of this research can be conducted without the trouble of making an appointment.

7. YOUM AL BAHAR BOOKSHOP

- **Location**: On Gulf Road in the "Heritage Village" across the street from the National Assembly building.
- **Hours**: Open weekday evenings only, and sporadically.
- **Resources & Notes**:

This bookstore is run by a local historian and collector. He has an encyclopedic knowledge of obscure Kuwaiti publications and historical events that can be extremely useful. He also knows a good number of other collectors of Kuwait memorabilia, and so can be an entry into that world if such materials are useful for research. The books tend to be pricy, but he has a personal archive at his home and has been known to photocopy useful materials for researchers. The Kuwaiti manager is not always actually at the bookstore, so try and call or plan ahead to catch him. It may just require more than one visit.

8. KUWAIT BOOK FAIR

- **Location**: Kuwait International Fairground at Mubarak al Abdullah
- **Hours**: Annual event, usually in the winter, lasting several weeks. It is terribly advertised, so keep an eye out for announcements and check their Twitter and Instagram pages.
- **Resources & Notes**:

Standard Gulf book fair with lots of publishers from around the Arabic-speaking world. In previous years, censorship restrictions were relaxed, but they were tightened again in 2017.

9. DIGITIZED RECORDS

Qatar Digital Library: https://www.qdl.qa
For those of you who haven't discovered this yet, the British Library (with Qatari funding) has digitized vast numbers of files from the India Office Records, physically stored at the BL in London. It also includes articles on items of research interest, and a growing selection of miscellaneous digitized records.

National Assembly website: http://www.kna.kw/clt-html5/index.asp

This archive: http://archive.sakhrit.co/

Remarkable collection of digitized Arabic-language magazines. Kuwaiti publications include al Ba'atha (published by the Kuwaiti Cultural Center in Cairo starting in the forties), al Arabi (one of the most popular publications in the Arab world, starting in the late fifties), and al Mujtama' (Islamist publication starting around 1970).

10. MIRROR HOUSE MUSEUM

- **Location**: Qadisiya Bock 9, Street 94, House 17, 35809 Kuwait
- **Contact**: mirrorhouseq8@gmail.com, (965)5074 7677
- **Hours**: By appointment.
- **What to bring**: your own camera, hand scanner.
- **Website**: https://www.mirrorhouseq8.com/
- **Resources & Notes**: this contribution from Beth Derderian. Khalifa and Lidia Qattan have an incredible personal archive of art exhibition catalogs from across the Arab world, dating from the 1960s onwards. Lidia Qattan and her daughter Jalila run the museum now; if you're hoping to visit the archive just email in advance and set up a time. You should also bring your own camera or scanning tool, as this is a private initiative and not built for researcher access. They provide plastic gloves, karak, and a great attitude. Street parking available.

11. SULTAN GALLERY

- **Location**: South Sabhan, Block 8, Street 105, Bldg 168. It's down south by the airport in an industrial area, lest you get nervous that you've gotten lost. Detailed map available here: http://www.sultangallery.com/contact/.
- **Hours**: Call ahead and ask for Farida. You will need her permission to access their archive.
- **What to bring**: your own camera/scanning tool
- **Website**: www.sultangallery.com
- **Resources & Notes**: This contribution from Beth Derderian. The Sultan Gallery opened in 1969 and Farida has maintained significant documentation since the gallery's opening.

12. OTHER CENTERS FOR REGIONAL RESEARCH

Gulf University for Science and Technology:

- Global Studies Center (Has hosted Fulbrighters), https://gsc.gust.edu.kw/

Gulf Centre for Development Policies

- with resources primarily in Arabic. https://www.gulfpolicies.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=171&Itemid=196

American University of Kuwait

- Gulf Studies Center (Has hosted Fulbrighters and visiting scholars), http://www.auk.edu.kw/cgs/

- Library resources include a good selection of hardcopy resources, extensive digital collections, Kuwait oral history and documentation project, British political agent archives (1899-1949), Kuwaiti laws and decrees records, Arabic magazine archives (Sakhr), and other resources, most of which require access from campus. https://www.auk.edu.kw/academics/Library

Good luck!