

Introduction

The John Rylands University Library of Manchester was formed in 1972 by the merger of Manchester University Library and the formerly independent John Rylands Library.

The origins of Manchester University Library may be traced back to 1851, when James Heywood donated some 1,200 volumes to the newly-opened Owens College, which half a century later became the Victoria University of Manchester. The College moved from its original premises on Quay Street to its present site on Oxford Road in 1873. The Library was first accommodated in a suite of rooms in the main building, but was later rehoused in purpose-built premises, erected between 1895 and 1898 to an early English Gothic design by Alfred Waterhouse. The building was constructed by the munificence of Professor Richard Copley Christie, and was named in his honour.

Early benefactors of Owens College Library included Bishop James Prince Lee, Angus Smith, E.A. Freeman, Walter L. Bullock and Christie himself, who bequeathed his fine collection of Renaissance literature from France and Italy. After Owens College became the University of Manchester in 1904, rapid expansion of the stock necessitated two extensions to the Christie Library, in 1914 and 1927, and eventually a completely new arts and social science library was opened in 1936. By 1972 the University Library held approximately one million books, of which 200,000 were deemed to be rare.

The John Rylands Library was founded by Mrs Enriqueta Augustina Rylands, as a memorial to her husband, who died in 1888. John Rylands was one of the most successful entrepreneurs of the nineteenth century, developing the family firm of Rylands & Sons into the largest cotton-manufacturing enterprise in Britain. He left a fortune of £2.75 million. Mrs Rylands commissioned the architect Basil Champneys to design her Library in the neo-Gothic style. Construction of the building on Deansgate, in the heart of Manchester, began in 1890 and was completed in 1899, the first readers being admitted on 1 January 1900.

Mrs Rylands's original intention had been to create a public reference and lending library with a bias towards Nonconformist

theology. However, the purchase of two major collections transformed her foundation into a research library of international importance. In 1892 she purchased from Lord Spencer what was generally regarded as the finest library then in private ownership, comprising over 40,000 volumes, including some 4,000 incunables and many notable Bibles. Nine years later, in 1901, Mrs Rylands bought a collection of over 6,000 manuscripts in some fifty different languages, assembled by the twenty fifth and twenty sixth Earls of Crawford. The John Rylands Library's status as a research library of world-wide standing was thus assured.

Mrs Rylands generously endowed her Library to ensure its long-term viability after her death in 1908. However, the combined effects of inflation triggered by the First World War, and the decline of the Lancashire cotton industry from 1921 onwards, from which most of the Library's investment income was derived, seriously reduced the Library's financial base. Nevertheless, through donations and deposits the stock of the John Rylands Library continued to expand, and several extensions were made to the original Champneys building. By 1972 the John Rylands Library held approximately 570,000 printed books, 17,000 manuscripts and some 250,000 deeds, charters and papers, covering virtually every area of the humanities.

Formal and informal links between Manchester University Library and the John Rylands Library had always been close. Many of the University's academic staff had served on the Rylands Council of Governors, contributed to its lecture series, written for the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, and assisted in cataloguing its collections. From 1949 the University had also provided financial assistance to the John Rylands Library to mitigate the shortfall in its income. This ever-closer co-operation culminated in 1972 in the merger of the two institutions into the John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

The outstanding collections of rare books, manuscripts and archives which both predecessor institutions had built up now constitute the Special Collections Division of the JRULM. The vast majority of these research resources are housed in the Deansgate Building of the former John Rylands Library, in Manchester's city-centre, while the teaching and reference stock and electronic resources are concentrated at the Main University Library. In the last decade concerted efforts have been made to promote greater awareness of, and access to, the Library's Special Collections. In 1987 the John Rylands Research Institute was established to fund research, cataloguing, conservation and promotion of the collections, and the preservation and maintenance of the Deansgate Building. More recently the Library has been the recipient of generous non-formula funding from the Higher

Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE). This has facilitated the retrospective conversion of the numerous manual catalogues of printed books into machine-readable form; for the first time scholars are able to search through a single database of the Library's printed books, not only within the Library itself but, with access to the Internet, from anywhere in the world. Moreover, many hitherto unlisted archive and printed-book collections have been newly catalogued, while significant improvements have been made to the Library's conservation resources and facilities. Hand-in-hand with these developments, there is an active outreach programme to promote the collections within the University of Manchester and among the wider academic community.

It is hoped that this *Guide* will serve further to promote knowledge and use of the outstanding Special Collections of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester.

Manuscripts and Archives

The Library's manuscript collections originated in Mrs Rylands's purchase of the personal collection of the Earl of Crawford in 1901. Holdings of individual manuscript items now cover more than fifty languages, including all the major European and Middle Eastern languages, and numerous Far Eastern scripts. They span five millennia, and are written on virtually every medium ever employed. The subject range is vast, encompassing literary, historical, antiquarian, genealogical, biblical, devotional, ritualistic, medical, scientific, legal and administrative texts.

The Library first acquired archive collections in the 1920s when local landed families were invited to donate or deposit their papers. In addition to family muniment collections, the Library now holds the archives of numerous companies, business associations, trade unions, charities, social organizations and religious institutions. The Methodist Church and other Nonconformist denominations are particularly well represented. The archives of Manchester University and the papers of individual scientists and academics are another important element in the Library's holdings, while the large archive of the *Manchester Guardian* newspaper is a key resource for a wide range of research interests. In another area, the Library is continually adding to its wealth of twentieth-century literary and dramatic archives.

Printed Book Collections

The printed book collections of the JRULM are among the finest in the world. The foundation stone of the Library's printed collections was laid in 1892 when Mrs Rylands purchased the Spencer Collection. This was generally acknowledged to be the

finest library then in private ownership. The JRULM holds some 4,000 incunables, representing over 500 European presses, including the largest collection of Aldines in the world and the second largest collection of works printed by Caxton. There are some 12,500 books printed between 1475 and 1640, and some 45,000 printed between 1641 and 1700. Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century holdings comprise 160,000 and 400,000 volumes respectively.

These collections encompass almost all the landmarks of printing through five centuries, including magnificent illustrated books, examples of fine printing, landmark works in typography, key historical texts and exquisite bookbindings. They cover a wide range of subjects: theology and philosophy; economic, social, political and military history; travel and exploration; literature, drama and music; art and archaeology; science and medicine.

Guide to Special Collections

This *Guide* contains summary descriptions of the majority of the outstanding Special Collections held by the JRULM. In almost all cases more detailed finding aids to individual collections are available from the Library: these are cited in the *Guide*. It should also be noted that a subject card catalogue of printed books is available within the Deansgate Building. Some collections which are poorly documented or are of secondary importance have been omitted from the *Guide*. As new collections are acquired, or unlisted collections are catalogued, these will be incorporated into future editions. If the collection or subject you are interested in does not feature, please seek advice from the Library staff (see below).

In the following pages the Library's manuscript, archive and printed collections have been grouped into twelve subject/format categories, which are listed on the Contents page. Each section or chapter commences with a general description and alphabetical listing of the collections it encompasses; the descriptions of individual collections follow, manuscript/archive collections generally preceding printed-book collections. Many collections are diverse in their subject matter and research potential, and consequently feature in more than one category. An on-line version of this *Guide* is available at: <http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/data2/spcoll/>.

All collections are housed at the Deansgate Building unless otherwise stated.

Catalogues

The principal manual catalogues of printed books in the Deansgate Building have recently been computerized in a major project funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England

(HEFCE). Records from these catalogues are now available on the Library's computer catalogue, and are accessible via the Internet at <http://rylibweb.man.ac.uk/spcollcat>. The principal catalogues include: (a) the printed Guardbook Catalogue in seven volumes, listing the John Rylands Library's acquisitions between 1889 and c.1896, most notably the Spencer Collection; (b) the Supplementary Catalogue on slips recording accessions between c.1896 and 1978; (c) the Special Collections card catalogue containing details of rare books transferred from the Main Library to Deansgate since 1972, together with all books added to stock since 1978; (d) the published catalogue of the Christie Collection. In addition to the retrospective conversion programme, original cataloguing has taken place on over twenty discrete printed collections. Readers are advised that, while the majority of Deansgate printed books are recorded in the 'Special Collections' computer catalogue, some discrete collections and recently-acquired materials are available in the 'Main' catalogue.

There are also numerous published and unpublished finding aids to the Library's manuscript and archival collections. Many archive catalogues have been produced since 1995 as part of another HEFCE-funded project, and it is intended that these will be made available on-line, via the Internet, in the near future. The majority of the manuscript and archive finding aids have also been reproduced on microfiche in the *National Inventory of Documentary Sources in the United Kingdom and Ireland*, copies of which are available in a number of major research libraries across the world.

Access Arrangements

Admission to the Deansgate Building for reading purposes is by ticket only, either a valid University of Manchester Library card or a ticket issued from Deansgate itself. In the latter case prior written application is normally required though immediate admission may sometimes be possible on production of a letter of introduction and/or formal proof of identity. In either case additional identification or authorization may be requested where the reader wishes to consult especially rare books or manuscripts, or certain deposited collections. The Library reserves the right to refuse applications for tickets in the interests of the conservation and security of stock. No charge is made for readers' tickets issued from the Deansgate Building.

Readers are advised to contact the Library in advance of their visit.

John Rylands University Library,

150 Deansgate,

Manchester,

M3 3EH

Telephone: +44 (0)161 834 5343 Fax: +44 (0)161 834 5574

General enquiries:	Dr Peter McNiven, Head of Special Collections;
Archive enquiries:	Mr John Hodgson, Co-ordinating Archivist;
Modern literary archive enquiries:	Ms Stella Halkyard, Archivist for Modern Literary Archives;
Methodist enquiries:	Dr Peter Nockles, Methodist Church Archivist.
John Rylands University Library, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PP Telephone: +44 (0)161 275 3738 Fax: +44 (0)161 273 7488	
General enquiries:	Ms Janet Wallwork, Reference and Enquiry Librarian.

General Bibliography

The *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* (first published in 1903 and until 1972 entitled the *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*) is the most important of the Library's publications. For many years each issue included a 'Notes and News' section containing details of each important collection as soon as it had been acquired. Indexes to the *Bulletin* for volumes 1–25, 26–50 and 51–60 have so far been published. Recent acquisitions are now reported in the *John Rylands Research Institute Newsletter*.

Catalogue of the Printed Books in the John Rylands Library, 3 vols (Manchester, 1899), contains details of the Spencer Collection and other printed collections acquired by c.1895; it was reproduced on microfiche by Chadwyck-Healey (see below).

Chadwyck-Healey, *Catalogue of Printed Books in the Rare Books Division of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* (Cambridge, 1989). This microfiche edition of the Library's principal research catalogues gives details of holdings up to 1978. It was issued in two parts: the Guardbook Catalogue of 1899 (3,972 pp.), and the Supplementary Slip Catalogue (501,933 slips).

Henry Guppy, *The John Rylands Library, Manchester, 1899–1924: a Record of its History with Brief Descriptions of the Building and its Contents* (Manchester, 1924).

Henry Guppy, *The John Rylands Library, Manchester, 1899–1935: a Brief Record of its History with Descriptions of the Building and its Contents* (Manchester, 1935).

The Riches of the Rylands: Prospectus of the John Rylands Research Institute (Manchester, 1993).

Frank Taylor, *The John Rylands University Library of Manchester* (Manchester, 1982).

Frank Taylor, 'The John Rylands Library, 1936-72', *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*, vol. 71, no. 2 (1989), pp. 39-66.

Moses Tyson, 'The First Forty Years of the John Rylands Library', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, vol. 25 (1941), pp. 46-66.

